

Research Statement

Inscape Publishing's Commitment to Ongoing Research.

Inscape Publishing is committed to maintaining the highest standards of instrument development and application through careful research and development processes. We ensure all of our instruments offer valid scores and accurate feedback to the respondent. Each instrument is designed to provide reasonably accurate interpretations or feedback based on your scores.

Validation

Psychological instruments are used to measure abstract qualities that we can't touch or see, like intelligence, dominance, or honesty. So how do researchers evaluate these instruments? How do we know whether such tools are actually providing accurate information about these characteristics or just generating haphazard feedback that sounds believable? Simply put, if an instrument is indeed useful and accurate, it should meet a variety of different standards that have been established by the scientific community throughout the years. Validation is the process through which researchers assess the quality of a psychological instrument by testing the tool against these different standards.

Validation asks two fundamental questions:

1. **How reliable is the tool?** That is, researchers ask if an instrument measures in a way that is consistent and dependable. If the results from a tool contain a lot of random variation, it will be deemed less reliable.
2. **How valid is the tool?** That is, researchers ask if an instrument measures accurately. The more that a tool measures what it proposes to measure, the more valid the tool is.

The following analogy usually helps people understand the importance of reliability and validity. Imagine that you get on your bathroom scale today and weigh yourself. Tomorrow you do the same thing, only to discover that your weight has dropped by 30 percent. Although you may be delighted at first, reality will eventually set in. Your weight didn't change; the scale did. Would you trust such a scale? No, it's not reliable.

But now let's imagine a second instance in which you weighed yourself twice and both times the scale shows that you weigh about half of what you expected. So although you may have a reliable scale, it's reliably wrong. The scale doesn't measure what it proposes to measure: your weight. It's not valid.

In the first instance, the scale is neither reliable nor valid. That is, the scale can't be a valid measurement of your weight if it fluctuates randomly and unreliably in its results. Therefore, an instrument cannot be valid if it is not reliable. In the second instance, however, we have a scale that is reliable but not valid. It does measure consistently (i.e., reliably), but that measurement is not accurate (i.e., valid.)

Note that no psychometric tool is perfectly reliable or perfectly valid. All psychological instruments are subject to various sources of error. Reliability and validity are matters of degree on continuous scales, rather than reliable/unreliable and valid/invalid on dichotomous scales. Consequently, it is more appropriate to ask, "How reliable is this tool?" than "Is this tool reliable?"

What is a Research Report?

A research report provides information on the history and development of a learning instrument. In addition, information is included on how the reliability and validity of the instrument was established. Research reports are available on the product pages of our web site.