

Example of Research Methods Review

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Walsh, C.A., MacMillan, H.L., Trocme, N., Jamieson, E. & Boyle, M.H. (2008) Measurement of victimization in adolescence: Development and validation of the Childhood Experiences of Violence Questionnaire. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 32(11), 1037-1057.

Key Points from the Article

In general, longer, more detailed instruments provide more reliable and valid results. However, they also take longer for the respondent to complete, which makes them cumbersome, especially instruments used with youth. There are several instruments for evaluating victimization and violence, but most are long and many were developed for adults. The authors wanted to develop a more concise instrument appropriate for youth. They used three steps to develop and test the instrument: (1) instrument formulation, (2) pilot testing, and (3) instrument validation.

Key Point 1: The process of instrument development is lengthy and requires rigor and attention at every step – even in generating potential items for an instrument. The article provides a lot of insight into the actual process of instrument development – the details. They used existing instruments based on an extensive literature review and interviewed 12 national and international experts to generate questions for the instrument (a questionnaire). They then got youth to assess clarity of wording, whether the response options made “sense” to them, and whether the items were acceptable to youth – fit their circumstances. So even at phase 1 they tested the draft with a group representative of the ultimate users. They pilot tested the draft version two ways. They used a test-retest to determine reliability and focus groups of youths to evaluate acceptability, meaning and clarity.

Key Point 2: Even after pilot testing, they conducted four more tests during the instrument validation phase. They used test-retest again to make sure that reliability remained high, but most of the validation process deals with making sure that an instrument provides a valid measure of what it is “supposed” to measure. This is complex and probably isn’t done well enough with many instruments. They evaluated content validity, construct validity, and criterion validity. For construct validity, they used a panel of 11 experts, each of whom scored every items on a scale of 1 to 4 for relevancy. They say that an endorsement of at least 8 experts is generally considered adequate to establish content validity beyond the 0.05 significance level. For construct validity, they compared the results of youth who have self-reported violence or victimization to those that have not on both their new instrument and on previously well-tested instruments and compared the results. For criterion validity, 11 clinicians caring for the 93 youth who completed the previous step, compared their clinical determination about victimization and violence with the results of the tests on the instrument – testing to see if the instrument correctly identified the youths that were diagnosed independently as suffering from violence.

How the article builds upon, contrasts with and/or extends the concepts covered in the assigned readings

1. This article provides a lot more detail about what it means to examine reliability and validity than Bryman. He does not discuss concrete ways to do this in much detail. This article provides examples and ideas about good ways to ensure reliability and validity. The authors are very specific about all of the procedures they used.
2. They do not refer at all to “face” validity. I found this interesting because the idea of face validity seems strange to me – that a researcher can ensure validity just based on the items sort of “making sense.” However, Bryman discusses this and so does Kane. I conclude that this concept of validity is not a universal one shared by all researchers.
3. These authors used interviews and focus groups as ways of evaluating reliability and validity. Dr. Swisher provided us with a set of statistical measures to use. This article shows that non-statistical approaches can be used, too.
4. This article addresses many of the concerns about validity raised in the Kane article and in the Wikman article. However, it does not address the issue of “true value” that Wikman discusses, and does not include some of the ideas about validity that Kane discusses (see above).
5. This article stresses the importance of testing for clarity, meaning and relevancy with the same kind of people who will ultimately use the instrument – youth in this case. None of the authors (Kane, Perakyla, Bryman or Wikman) of our assigned readings raise this point. I think it is an important one.
6. Wikman discusses the relationship between reliability and validity. The authors of this article seem to treat the two as independent of each other. It seems to me that Wikman’s argument that the two are related – that you cannot have a valid measure that is not also reliable – is correct.