

Reliability and validity in human services research

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Reliability and Validity in Human Services Research Here s Here Reliability and Validity The field of human services provides assistance for vulnerable peoples (such as children and mental health patients) in dealing with the challenges they may face during day-to-day activities. Social workers, youth counselors, and psychologists may all be considered to be human service providers. Professionals in the human services sector are greatly aided by experimental and other types of research. The researchers who offer this information are sometimes also a frontline service provider. This situation is ideal for streamlining the information-to-action process. However, human service providers of all types should be expected to be up-to-date regarding the research that most significantly impacts their field.

Observation and Measurement The majority of scientific research is based on the observation-measurement paradigm. Essentially, this approach involves observing an event for some specific quality (or qualities) and recording the results using an established scale of measurement. Experiments typically employ at least two conditions in which the event is tested. These conditions constitute the event as it would naturally happen (the control condition), as well as the event under the effects of some sort of manipulation (the experimental condition). Many manipulations would result in many conditions, and a different group of observations are required for each separate group. There are four possible scales of measurement in which the event data may be recorded, including nominal (categorical like colors), ordinal (has an order like sizes), interval (has an integral order like temperature), and ratio (has a meaningful zero-point like age). The type of scale used, as well as other factors such as the size of the groups, will dictate the kind of mathematical statistic required to analyze the data (Grimm, 1993). The representative <https://assignbuster.com/reliability-and-validity-in-human-services-research/>

research process is executed under constant scrutiny from the researcher(s), and must ultimately be approved by a group of peers before it can be published as an article in a respected academic or professional journal. Fulfilling concepts known as validity and reliability are among the many requirements that must be met in order for most research to be taken seriously. Human service professionals should be aware of these concepts so that they may personally evaluate research before deciding if it is worth incorporating into their current service interactions.

Research Validity One of the most important functions of research is to provide valid (true) information. There are several types of validity that should be satisfied when evaluating human service related research. Internal validity is met when the manipulations that we are measuring are the only factors that are contributing to the observed measurements. Research with a high internal validity is designed to account for potentially confounding variables through elimination of the variable of by balancing unwanted effects among all groups. In human services research, accounting for seasonal differences in clients' situations may strengthen internal validity. Face validity is very important in test designs, as it describes how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure without considering external variables. Any mental health test used in human services should have high face validity; otherwise the assessment would be useless concerning its intended usage. Construct validity is similar to face validity, but it is concerned with the validity of the concepts that are measured, rather than the test as a whole. Discriminant validity (how well the test differs from unrelated tests) and convergent validity (how well the test agrees with similar tests), as well as external validity (how well a test generalizes to the world outside of research) are all

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indicators of the value of a test, and should be considered when evaluating any research in human services or otherwise. Research Reliability A reliable test will produce similar results each time it is used. While validity is used to evaluate the concepts of research, reliability is a characteristic of the measurements obtained. Inter-rater reliability refers to the variability in measurements taken by different people with the same test method, while test-retest reliability refers to the variation in measurements when the same person is evaluated with a test (or otherwise) multiple times. Inter-method reliability is how well test-result variability matches other methods when performed by the same subject, and internal consistency reliability evaluates how well the measurements throughout the same test agree with each other. Human service professionals need to be aware of the different types of reliability when using any type of test method with clients. Collection Methods, Instruments, and Conclusion A multitude of methods and instruments may be employed as part of a human service professional's repertoire. Data collection methods may include the one-on-one office environment and home reporting by the client. Professionals must be aware of the validity challenges that are introduced by such methods (such as confounding variables) so that the results can be accurately interpreted. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and the Perceived Social Competence Scale (PSCS) are examples of data collection instruments that may be used in a human service environment (Anderson-Butcher, Iachini, and Amorose, 2008). The reliability and validity of such instruments will aid in the accurate evaluation of the results by human service professionals.

References Anderson-Butcher, D., Iachini, A. L., & Amorose, A. J. (2008). Initial reliability and validity of the perceived social competence scale. <https://assignbuster.com/reliability-and-validity-in-human-services-research/>

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