How to Find a Valid and Reliable Measure

Where to Look

Google Search or Google Scholar Search

Useful search terms include:

   i.   Audience (student, child, youth, adult, etc.)
   ii. Category to address (possibly with one or two different phrasings)
   iii. "Survey" "Measure" or "Checklist"

For example, a search for measures of middle school students' interest in STEM might be: "STEM interest attitudes survey student"

Repositories of measures

- CASEL Assessment Guide
  - A searchable, filterable catalog of student SEL assessments. View summaries of each assessment then access the full profile for each to learn more.
- RAND Education Assessment Finder
  - An interactive tool with information on more than 200 assessments of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and higher-order cognitive competencies.
- USAID Positive Youth Development Measurement Toolkit
  - The Positive Youth Development Measurement Toolkit provides guidance and resources for implementers of youth programming to effectively measure PYD outputs and outcomes within their programs.

What to Look For

Validity

The extent to which a measure captures what it is intended to measure.

- Face validity
  - Read the questions. Do they match your topic?
- Content validity
  - Have experts reviewed this survey?
  - Have people with lived experience reviewed this survey?
    These steps are necessary to check if anything important is missing from the survey.
- Criterion validity
  - Do scores on this survey match scores on other, related surveys or outcomes? A correlation of $r = .50$ is the recommended minimum (Sullivan, 2001).

Reliability

The extent to which a measure produces consistent results using the same methods under similar circumstances (Bandalos, 2018).

- Cronbach's alpha
  - Cronbach's alpha represents how consistent the survey items are within the measure. The following are general guidelines for cut-offs (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999):
    - .90 and above   Excellent
    - .80 - .89   Good
    - .70 - .79   Adequate
    - Below .70   Limited Application

References

Bandalos, D. L. (2018). Measurement theory and applications for the social sciences. The Guilford Press.

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Saad, S., Carter, G. W., Rothenberg, M., & Israelson, E. (1999). Testing and assessment: an employer's guide to good practices. US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. Washington, DC.

Sullivan, T.J. (2001). Methods of social research. Fort Worth: Harcourt.

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