

Concurrent Validity

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Concurrent Validity

Primary Disciplinary Field(s): Psychology, Psychometrics, Educational Measurement, Research Methodology

1. Core Definition

Concurrent validity represents a crucial aspect of **criterion-related validity**, serving as an indicator of how accurately a new test or assessment instrument reflects a particular construct by comparing its results with those of an already established and widely accepted measure of the same construct. Essentially, it evaluates the extent to which a measurement tool's performance aligns with current performance on a similar, pre-existing, and validated measurement. This comparison is typically performed at the same point in time, allowing for a simultaneous assessment of both measures.

The operationalization of concurrent validity involves correlating the scores obtained from the new test with those from the established criterion measure. A high **correlation coefficient** between these two sets of scores suggests that the new measure is effectively capturing the same underlying construct as the proven one, thereby demonstrating strong concurrent validity. Conversely, a low correlation coefficient would indicate a weak relationship, implying that the new test may not be an accurate or equivalent measure of the intended construct.

For example, consider an employer who develops a novel, shorter scale to evaluate the leadership skills of their employees. To ascertain its concurrent validity, they would administer this new scale to their employees on the same day as a widely recognized, longer, and well-validated leadership test that has been in use for decades. If the scores achieved by each employee on the newly designed scale closely mirror their scores on the established, older test, then the new scale can be deemed to possess high concurrent validity. This demonstrates its immediate relevance and accuracy in measuring leadership capabilities, providing confidence in its utility as a substitute or alternative to the more cumbersome established measure.

2. Etymology and Historical Development

While the precise etymology of the term "concurrent validity" traces its conceptual roots to the idea of "concurrent" measurement (occurring at the same time), its formal introduction into the field of psychometrics is attributed to the pioneering work of **E.L. Thorndike**. In 1916, Thorndike articulated the concept, defining it as "the degree to which the scores on a test correlate with the scores on a criterion measure that is taken at the same time."

Thorndike's early contributions laid foundational groundwork for understanding how newly developed psychological and educational assessments could be rigorously evaluated against

existing standards. His definition underscored the importance of simultaneity in measurement, differentiating concurrent validity from other forms of validity, such as predictive validity, where the criterion measure is taken at a future point. This initial conceptualization by Thorndike marked a significant step in establishing systematic approaches to test validation, influencing subsequent generations of psychometricians and researchers in their efforts to develop reliable and accurate assessment tools.

3. Key Characteristics

Concurrent validity is fundamentally classified as a type of **criterion-related validity**. This classification signifies its reliance on a measurable external criterion against which a new test's performance is judged, distinguishing it from construct validity (which focuses on theoretical constructs) and content validity (which assesses content representativeness).

A primary characteristic of concurrent validity is its method of assessing a test's accuracy. It achieves this by directly comparing the scores generated by the test in question against scores derived from a well-established and accepted measure that targets the identical construct. This comparative approach ensures that the new instrument is functionally equivalent to a trusted standard.

The relationship between the two measures (the new test and the criterion measure) is quantified through statistical **correlation**. This involves calculating a **correlation coefficient**, which mathematically expresses the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the scores obtained from both instruments. This statistical analysis forms the empirical backbone of concurrent validity assessment.

The interpretation of the **correlation coefficient** is critical: a high coefficient indicates a strong, positive relationship, suggesting that the two measures are indeed assessing the same underlying construct. Conversely, a low correlation coefficient implies a weak or negligible relationship, signaling that the new test may not be a valid measure of the intended construct when compared to the established criterion.

4. Significance and Impact

The significance of **concurrent validity** within psychometrics and applied research cannot be overstated, particularly for the development and adoption of new assessment instruments. It provides a robust and practical method for validating novel tests, scales, or procedures by establishing their credibility against already proven benchmarks. This process is especially vital when researchers or practitioners aim to introduce more efficient, cost-effective, or less time-consuming alternatives to existing, often lengthy or resource-intensive, gold-standard measures.

By demonstrating high concurrent validity, a new test gains substantial credibility, ensuring that its results are meaningful and comparable to those obtained from established tools. This assurance is critical across various fields, including clinical psychology for diagnostic screening, educational measurement for student assessment, and industrial-organizational psychology for employee selection and performance evaluation. It empowers professionals to confidently implement new tools, knowing they uphold the measurement standards set by their predecessors.

Ultimately, concurrent validity contributes directly to the overall scientific rigor and trustworthiness of psychological and educational measurement. It facilitates innovation in test development while simultaneously safeguarding against the proliferation of unvalidated instruments, thereby ensuring that decisions made based on test scores are reliable and justifiable. The practical implications extend to improving the efficiency of data collection, reducing administrative burdens, and enhancing the accessibility of psychological assessment.

5. Debates and Criticisms

While crucial for establishing the practical utility of new assessment tools, the provided source material does not detail specific debates or criticisms directly pertaining to the concept of concurrent validity itself. However, like all psychometric validity types, its application and interpretation can be subject to challenges inherent in validity studies. These often revolve around the selection of an appropriate and truly "gold-standard" criterion measure, ensuring its own reliability and validity are unquestionable. Issues such as criterion contamination, where the criterion measure is influenced by the new test or by factors irrelevant to the construct being measured, can also complicate the interpretation of concurrent validity coefficients.

Further Reading

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