

Webinar II: Tips for Finding Validity Evidence in Journal Articles

The best source of information about validity comes from research articles. Unfortunately, depending on how well the article is written and edited, it can be hard to find it. To further your pain, the evidence may not be clearly labeled, as in “the content validity is X, the response process validity is Y.” Worse yet, authors might use different terms than the ones we use. For example, “construct validation” is an approach that supports the internal structure of a test, and both convergent and divergent data can help build an argument for construct validity. Lastly, sometimes the information just isn’t there. It is rare for any tool to have information for all five validity sources—especially in a single article. Having spent a fair amount of time looking for validity evidence in journal articles, here are some tips.

- **Content validity** is perhaps the most reported type of evidence. It usually appears in the article’s introduction, literature review and methods sections, and may be revisited in the discussion section. The reference section also provides clues to the “pedigree” for a tool’s content.
- Evidence of **response process validity** is often omitted, and it can be unclear. When it is present, it is usually buried in the methods section. Authors who are summarizing results of preliminary pilots may put it there or in the literature review. If authors find anomalies with data they collected, such as a low response rate or missing data, they typically report it in the results section. Information on inter-rater reliability or agreement may be found in either the methods or results sections.
- Information about a tool’s **internal structure** is probably the second-most reported type of validity data. You’ll see it in the methods and results sections as well as the discussion, tables and figures.
- Evidence establishing the **relationships between instrument scores and other variables** is harder and more costly to get, so it tends to be less available. When it is present, however, it usually features in multiple sections of the article.
- Last but not least, evidence of consequential validity is rare. We sometimes see it, almost as an aside, in the discussion section, if authors summarize user feedback or the costs of assessment. That said, review articles focusing on the most established, cited tools may include information on costs and benefits of the tool.

Validity Source	Sections of a Journal Article					
	Intro	Methods	Results	Discussion	Tables, Figures	References
Content	X	X		X		X
Response Process		X	X			
Internal Structure		X	X	X	X	
Relation to Other Variables		X	X	X	X	X
Consequences				X		