

What is validity?

Internal validity: the study **measures what it intends to measure** (as confounding variables have been controlled and will not affect the results).

External validity: whether the study paints a true picture of real-life behaviours (mundane realism) and would apply to different places, different times, or different people (population validity).

What are validity issues?

Specific validity issues refer to factors that jeopardise validity of research during the data collection phase. There are three specific validity issues.

1. **Researcher bias:** the researcher directly or indirectly influences the results of a study, through the process of designing the study or through the way the research is conducted/analysed.
2. **Demand characteristics:** participants unconsciously work out the aim and act differently.
3. **Social desirability:** participants give the response that they think will show them in the best possible light, meaning they are not a true reflection of their thoughts/feelings.

How do we deal with validity issues?

Researcher bias can be overcome with a **double blind procedure**. This involves neither the researcher collecting the data, nor the participant involved, knowing the true aims of the study. It also reduces demand characteristics, where participants work out the aims and change their behaviour accordingly. Social desirability and demand characteristics can also be overcome via a **single blind procedure**. This involves the participants being unaware for the research hypothesis until after their role is complete. Alternatively, the use of independent groups would reduce these validity issues. By **giving participants anonymity and confidentiality** when they give their answers you can also increase validity.

Assessment

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge of internal and external validity, specific issues of validity and ways of dealing with them and assessing validity.

AO2: Apply knowledge of validity, its issues and ways validity can be assessed to novel scenarios, developmental (Kohlberg) and social (Milgram) psychology, and to the personal investigations.

Assessing validity:

Face validity: whether the test appears (at face value) to measure what it claims to, and hence is objective. Tests where the purpose is clear, even to naïve respondents, are said to have high face validity.

Predictive validity: the degree to which a test accurately forecasts a future outcome on a more broadly related topic. Do the findings apply in different and more varied situations?

Content validity: objectively checking whether the method of measuring behaviour is accurate and decides whether it is a fair test that achieves the aims of the study (internal validity). This can be achieved by asking an expert in that specific area of behaviour to check the validity.

Concurrent validity: validating a measurement by comparing it with an established measurement that has known validity. If similar results occur on both tests, then the new test has concurrent validity. If not, then the new test would have to be redesigned and tested.

Construct validity: looks at whether the overall results reflect the phenomena as a whole (external validity). It is achieved by checking the existing definitions of the behaviour being studied and redesigning the test if it measures a different construct.