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Abstract

Social capital is a relatively new concept which has attracted significant attention in recent years. No consensus has yet been reached on how to measure social capital, resulting in a large number of different tools available. While psychometric validation methods such as factor analysis have been used by a few studies to assess the internal validity of some tools, these techniques rely on data already collected by the tool and are therefore not capable of eliciting what the questions are actually measuring.

The Young Lives (YL) study includes quantitative measures of caregiver's social capital in four countries (Vietnam, Peru, Ethiopia, and India) using a short version of the Adapted Social Capital Assessment Tool (SASCAT). A range of different psychometric methods including factor analysis were used to evaluate the construct validity of SASCAT in Peru and Vietnam. In addition, qualitative cognitive interviews with 20 respondents from Peru and 24 respondents from Vietnam were conducted to explore what each question is actually measuring.

We argue that psychometric validation techniques alone are not sufficient to adequately validate multi-faceted social capital tools for use in different cultural settings. Psychometric techniques show SASCAT to be a valid tool reflecting known constructs and displaying postulated links with other variables. However, results from the cognitive interviews present a more mixed picture with some questions being appropriately interpreted by respondents, and others displaying significant differences between what the researchers intended them to measure and what they actually do.

Using evidence from a range of methods of assessing validity has enabled the modification of an existing instrument into a valid and low cost tool designed to measure social capital within larger surveys in Peru and Vietnam, with the potential for use in other developing countries following local piloting and cultural adaptation of the tool.

Keywords: Social capital, Psychometric validation; Qualitative; Factor analysis; Developing world; Peru; Vietnam.