On Validity, Reliability and Triangulation

Three fundamental constructs that will help you achieve rigour within your research.

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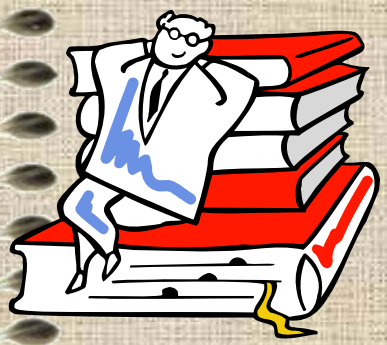


What do these terms mean?

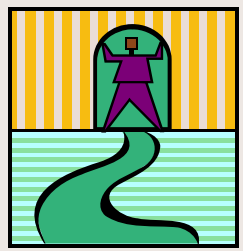
1. On a work-sheet, define for yourself, the terms *validity reliability* and *triangulation.*
2. Now make further notes specifically explaining how each term relates to your contemplated thesis.
3. What, in the final instance, will each of these terms mean for your research planning, your data gathering, data management and data analyses?
4. How will you ensure that you have reported validity and reliability and triangulation in your thesis?

Validity

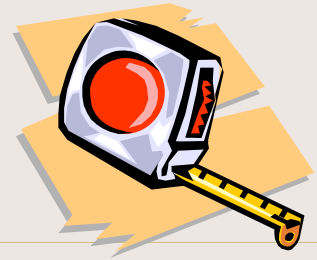
- *How valid is it?* When we ask this question, we inquire whether selected data gathering procedures achieve what we want them to achieve;
- *Validity*, therefore, refers to the degree to which data provide **relevant** information about the research situation being explored. How can you apply this to your topic?

Internal and External Validity

- *Internal Validity* refers to whether or not selected procedures influence data gathered:
  - How can an interview procedure impact upon data obtained?
  - What about observation techniques, surveys, etc?
- *External Validity* refers to the extent to which findings can be generalised. Will this construct be relevant to your contemplated research? Why, or why not?



Reliability



- *How reliable is it?* When we ask this question, we are concerned with the accuracy of data we have gathered. Are the findings the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?
- Reliability, therefore, refers to the degree to which data are truthful and the extent to which results are replicable.

Ways of ensuring reliability

- Reliability can ensue as a consequence of deriving data from multi-sources (this is the very essence of *triangulation*);
- Iterative data scans for similar results may indicate reliability (test-retest) but might not demonstrate validity. Why could that be so?
- Testing different segments of a procedure can indicate reliability (split-half);
- But again, the instruments must be valid or incorrect (invalid measures) will occur.