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## **Face Validity** <sup>[1]</sup>

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Face validity, as the name suggests, is a measure of how representative a research project is 'at face value,' and whether it appears to be a good project.

It is built upon the principle of reading through the plans and assessing the viability of the research <sup>[3]</sup>, with little objective measurement <sup>[4]</sup>.

Whilst face validity, sometime referred to as representation validity, is a weak measure of validity, its importance cannot be underestimated.

This 'common sense' approach often saves a lot of time, resources and stress.

## **Face Validity - Some Examples**

In many ways, face validity <sup>[5]</sup> offers a contrast to content validity <sup>[6]</sup>, which attempts to measure how accurately an experiment <sup>[7]</sup> represents what it is trying to measure.

The difference is that content validity is carefully evaluated, whereas face validity is a more general measure and the subjects often have input.

An example could be, after a group of students sat a test, you asked for feedback, specifically if they thought that the test was a good one. This enables refinements for the next research project and adds another dimension to establishing validity <sup>[8]</sup>.

Face validity is classed as 'weak evidence' supporting construct validity <sup>[9]</sup>, but that does not mean that it is incorrect, only that caution is necessary.

For example, imagine a research paper <sup>[10]</sup> about Global Warming. A layperson could read through it and think that it was a solid experiment <sup>[11]</sup>, highlighting the processes behind Global Warming.

On the other hand, a distinguished climatology professor could read through it and find the paper, and the reasoning <sup>[12]</sup> behind the techniques, to be very poor.

This example shows the importance of face validity as useful filter for eliminating shoddy research from the field of science, through peer review <sup>[13]</sup>.

# If Face Validity is so Weak, Why is it Used?

Especially in the social and educational sciences, it is very difficult to measure the content validity of a research program.

Often, there are so many interlinked factors that it is practically impossible to account for them all. Many researchers send their plans to a group of leading experts in the field, asking them if they think that it is a good and representative program.

This face validity should be good enough to withstand scrutiny and helps a researcher to find potential flaws before they waste a lot of time and money.

In the social sciences, it is very difficult to apply the scientific method [14], so experience and judgment are valued assets.

Before any physical scientists think that this has nothing to do with their more quantifiable approach [15], face validity is something that pretty much every scientist uses.

Every time you conduct a literature review [16], and sift through past research papers [10], you apply the principle of face validity.

Although you might look at who wrote the paper, where the journal [17] was from and who funded [18] it, ultimately, you ask 'Does this paper do what it sets out to?'

This is face validity in action.

## Bibliography

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[1] <https://staging.explorables.com/node/485>

[2] <https://staging.explorables.com/en>

[3] <https://staging.explorables.com/what-is-research>

[4] <https://staging.explorables.com/scientific-measurements>

[5] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Face\\_validity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Face_validity)

[6] <https://staging.explorables.com/content-validity>

[7] <https://staging.explorables.com/experimental-research>

[8] <https://staging.explorables.com/types-of-validity>

[9] <https://staging.explorables.com/construct-validity>

[10] <https://staging.explorables.com/writing-a-research-paper>

[11] <https://staging.explorables.com/conducting-an-experiment>

- [12] <https://staging.explorable.com/scientific-reasoning>
- [13] <https://staging.explorable.com/peer-review-process>
- [14] <https://staging.explorable.com/what-is-the-scientific-method>
- [15] <https://staging.explorable.com/quantitative-research-design>
- [16] <https://staging.explorable.com/what-is-a-literature-review>
- [17] <https://staging.explorable.com/academic-journals>
- [18] <https://staging.explorable.com/research-grant-funding>