

archival records: A source of operational definitions that consists of existing documents and institutional records.

conceptual definition: The meaning of a concept expressed in words that is derived from theory and/or observation. Also called *theoretical definition*.

conceptualization: Defining and clarifying the meaning of concepts.

construct validation: Measurement validation based on an accumulation of research evidence indicating that a measure is related to other variables as theoretically expected.

convergent validation: Measurement validation based on the extent to which independent measures of the same concept are associated with one another.

Cronbach's alpha: A statistical index of internal consistency reliability that ranges from 0 (unreliable) to 1 (perfectly reliable).

empirical indicator: A single, concrete proxy for a concept such as a questionnaire item in a survey.

exhaustive: The measurement requirement that a measure includes all possible values or categories of a variable so that every case can be classified.

index: A composite measure of a concept constructed by adding or averaging the scores of separate indicators; differs from a scale, which uses less arbitrary procedures for combining indicators.

inter-rater reliability: The extent to which different observers or coders get equivalent results when applying the same measure. Also called *inter-coder reliability*.

internal consistency: The consistency of “scores” across all the items of a composite measure (i.e., index or scale).

interval measurement: A level of measurement that has the qualities of the ordinal level plus equal distances (intervals) between assigned numbers.

measurement error: A lack of correspondence between a concept and measure that is due to problems with an operational definition or with its application.

measurement validity: The goodness of fit between an operational definition and the concept it is purported to measure.

mutual exclusivity: The measurement requirement that each case can be placed in one and only one category of a variable.

nominal measurement: A level of measurement in which numbers serve only to label categories of a variable.

operational definition: A detailed description of the research procedures necessary to assign units of analysis to variable categories.

operationalization: The process of identifying empirical indicators and the procedures for applying them to measure a concept.

ordinal measurement: A level of measurement in which different numbers indicate rank order of cases on a variable.

ratio measurement: The highest level of measurement, which has the features of the other levels plus an absolute (nonarbitrary) zero point.

reliability: The stability or consistency of an operational definition.

scale: A composite measure of a concept constructed by combining separate indicators according to procedures designed to ensure unidimensionality or other desirable qualities.

social desirability effect: A tendency of respondents to bias answers to self-report measures so as to project socially desirable traits and attitudes.

test-retest reliability: The association between repeated applications of an operational definition.

unidimensionality: Evidence that a scale or index is measuring only a single dimension of a concept.

verbal report: An operational definition based on respondents' answers to questions in an interview or questionnaire. Also called *self-report*.