

# The devil is in the details: Methodological nuances and challenges in evaluating construct redundancy

When does a new concept truly advance research, and when does it simply rename something scholars already understand?

Industrial and Organizational Psychology and related research fields, such as Organizational Behavior and Human Resources, have seen rapid growth in new constructs, raising concerns that some may simply duplicate concepts that already exist. In-Sue Oh and Huy Le examine the methodological challenges involved in evaluating this redundancy. Their commentary responds to a proposed checklist that identifies construct-level correlations of .85 or higher as a possible warning sign.

The authors explain that this cutoff cannot be interpreted consistently without reliable estimates that correct for random, item-specific, scale-specific and transient measurement error. Obtaining those estimates requires complex studies involving multiple measures and measurement occasions, a design rarely used in the field.

More importantly, even a very high correlation does not prove that two constructs are interchangeable. They may still have meaningfully different relationships with other variables. The authors therefore recommend comparing constructs across their full nomological networks, or their broader patterns of relationships with common causes, correlates and outcomes. Because corrected correlations can also become unstable in small samples, conclusions should be supported by large samples, independent replications or psychometric meta-analysis.

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## • MAJOR TAKEAWAYS:1

- A construct-level correlation of .85 may signal possible redundancy, but it should not be treated as universal proof.
- Accurate comparisons require reliability estimates that account for all major sources of measurement error, but these estimates are difficult to obtain and rarely reported.
- Strong redundancy claims require converging evidence from broader nomological networks, large samples, independent replications or meta-analysis.

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## WHO NEEDS TO KNOW:

- Industrial and organizational psychology researchers
- Organizational behavior and human resource management scholars
- Researchers developing or validating constructs and measurement scales
- Journal editors and peer reviewers
- Research methods scholars and doctoral students

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## CONTACT US:

- In-Sue Oh, Department of Management  
[insue.oh@temple.edu](mailto:insue.oh@temple.edu)
- The devil is in the details: Methodological nuances and challenges in evaluating construct redundancy
- Journal: *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*
- DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2026.10081>