



The physician values in practice scale: Construction and initial validation[☆]

Paul J. Hartung^{a,*}, Brian J. Taber^a, George V. Richard^b

^a *Department of Behavioral Science, Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine,
Rootstown, OH 4209, USA*

^b *Association of American Medical Colleges, Washington, DC, USA*

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Abstract

Measures of values typically appraise the construct globally, across life domains or relative to a broad life domain such as work. We conducted two studies to construct and initially validate an occupation- and context-specific values measure. Study 1, based on a sample of 192 medical students, describes the initial construction and item analysis of the physician values in practice scale (PVIPS), which produced a 15-factor model. Study 2 reports on a further analysis and refinement of the instrument with a national sample of 644 medical students. Results supported the basic psychometric properties of the PVIPS items. Exploratory factor analysis in Study 2 extracted six factors consistent with a theoretical model of values (Dawis, 1991) and accounting for 61% of the variance: Prestige, Service, Autonomy, Lifestyle, Management, and Scholarly Pursuits. The PVIPS shows promise as a values measure for medical students and physicians encountering career specialty and medical practice style decisions. Interested researchers may construct similar scales for other occupations to promote contextualized appraisals of values.

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* Corresponding author. Fax: +1 330 325 5901.

E-mail address: phartung@neoucom.edu (P.J. Hartung).

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1. Introduction

Psychometric scales have long been used to operationally define and appraise values in career counseling and research (Dawis, 1991; Super, 1983). Measures of values reflect one of two types (Dawis, 1991). The first type of values measure appraises the construct generally across the spectrum of human experience. General, or global values measures include the Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach, 1975) and the Study of Values (Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1970; Kopelman, Rovenpor, & Guan, 2003). The second type of values measure assesses values relative to a specific domain or context; typically the work, vocational, or occupational setting. Domain-specific values measures include the Work Values Inventory (Super, 1970), the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (Weiss, Dawis, & Lofquist, 1981), and the Values Scale (Super & Nevill, 1985). These measures index values in terms of outcomes or goals individuals seek from work generally in their lives and do not assess values relative to a particular occupational context.

Global and work-domain-specific values scales have proven useful for general life design, values clarification, and initial occupational decision making (Zytowski, 1994). Work values assessment in the form of psychometric scales has been criticized, however, for inadequately capturing and conveying the complexity of the construct (Krumboltz, Blando, Kim, & Reikowski, 1994). Such inadequacy may prove especially true when counselors or researchers apply extant work values measures, that appraise values broadly and abstractly, to situations in which individuals confront career specialty decision making. In the case of specialty choice, it would seem more appropriate and useful to consider values relative to the particular work or occupational domain in which those values would be practiced. Recognizing that existing work values measures lack such specificity, Krumboltz et al. (1994) argued for constructing context-specific values scales and suggested that “rather than asking an individual to make value choices outside the context of a particular occupation, assessment instruments might be devised that embed work values in a meaningful context” (p. 57). Further support for constructing context-specific values measures comes from parallel theoretical and empirical work in the arena of personality trait measurement. In this regard, Wright and Mischel (1987) proposed in the theory of conditional dispositions that manifest personality traits are situation-dependent, such that the same person behaves differently under different circumstances (e.g., introverted at work and extroverted at home). Personality measurement research has therefore advanced a line of inquiry that has provided evidence for the incremental validity of using context-specific items in personality appraisal (Bing, Whanger, Davison, & VanHook, 2004; Schmit, Ryan, Stierwalt, & Powell, 1995).

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