

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Psychometric Properties of a Measure of Competency for use in Civil Legal Proceedings

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The present research concerned the exploration of the psychometric properties of a psychologically based screening measure of competency for use in civil legal proceedings. Specifically, the measure was designed to assess a person's competency before executing a will or other important legal document. In a series of investigations, expert feedback was utilized to formulate the final version of the measure, possible scoring criteria, and overall goodness of fit to the research question. Additionally, reliability and factor structure of the competency measure were explored.

In a two-part study, expert feedback was sought using the Direct Consensus Method to determine final question inclusion for the measure, as well as to create a preliminary scoring system, which could be compared against a random sampling of participants obtained in the second part of the study. The experts ($N=49$) were members of one of two groups ($N = 22$ first feedback, $N = 27$ second feedback). Using the expert feedback the measure was presented to a randomized sample of individuals ($N=109$) who were given the measure and then scored based on the experts proposed methodology. Under the proposed method of scoring none of the randomized normals would have been

misidentified as incompetent. Finally, exploratory factor analysis was conducted using both a 2 and 3 factor model. Results from this analysis were inconclusive.