The Measurement of an Adult’s Cognitive Curiosity and Exploratory Behavior

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of cognitive curiosity through the development and validation of items that identify specific-epistemic, diverstive-epistemic, specific-perceptual, and diverstive perceptual factors of curiosity. The instrument was based on existing research that identifies each of the four hypothesized factors as a function of cognitive curiosity, which is the desire to seek out and integrate knowledge about one’s environment in order to improve or stimulate intellectual functioning. The Cognitive Curiosity Index (CCI) was constructed for this study, which included assessments of face validity, instrument readability, construct validity, content validity, and test reliability. Content validity was appraised through principal components analysis and item correlation to the sum of each proposed sub-scale. Assessment of Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine test internal reliability, and bivariate correlations were assessed to gauge test-retest reliability. The results of this study indicate that a valid and reliable test can be constructed using the items for the CCI. Further use of this study and subsequent instrument development includes the administration of the CCI to a large, stratified sample of the U.S. adult population. The development of normative statistics for the CCI will enable the instrument to become a more robust tool in the evaluation of adult cognitive curiosity. It is only through a complete understanding of cognitive curiosity that adult learning professionals can nurture and tap into this elusive personality trait to design relevant and engaging learning interventions.