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## **Valid cross-country comparisons using the EPC-interest**

### *Abstract:*

Cross-national surveys are done to compare countries. But findings of substantive differences are always threatened by the alternative explanation that the differences found are merely due to differences in measurement. For example, a country ranking on satisfaction may change substantially once cross-country differences in response behaviour are accounted for. Therefore, the size and statistical significance of measurement differences are often evaluated before any substantive comparisons are done: that is, “measurement invariance testing” is performed to rule out this threatening alternative explanation.

Unfortunately, the current practice of measurement invariance does not guarantee that the threat is truly ruled out. The reason for this worrying problem is that measurement invariance testing evaluates the size and significance of cross-country measurement differences without considering their effect on the parameters of interest. Because this effect may be large even when measurement differences appear small and vice versa, current practice fails to achieve the goal for which it was intended.

In this presentation I discuss a complementary measure that directly evaluates the impact of cross-country measurement differences, the recently introduced “EPC-interest”. This measure aims to rule out the threat of measurement differences to substantive conclusions by directly examining their effect on the results of interest. Using examples from the European Social Survey and the World Values Survey, I demonstrate that using this measure allows for more robust cross-country comparisons and solves some problems encountered in the published literature.