

TITLE

A structural analysis of Holland's circumplex across working ages

ABSTRACT

Vocational interest tests are a prominent tool in career advising (e.g., students and mid-career transitions) that rely on circumplex dependent fit indices (e.g., C-index, Iachan's M, HFLA; Brown & Gore, 1994; Camp & Chartrand, 1992). Yet, what has not been considered is when the advice is offered. Said differently, because fit indices are dependent on confirmation to the RIASEC hexagon, will the robustness of the career advice given be dependent on the age the person is taking the RIASEC inventory? Career counselors and researchers often fail to consider how a person's confirmation to the RIASEC hexagon can change with age. In our study, we examined the structural stability of people's RIASEC interest across the span of a typical career in $N = 42,693$ (age 18 to 65) participants. We find that even at age 18 there is fairly strong conformity to the RIASEC circumplex (i.e., structural validity). This suggests it reasonable to employ fit indices in career advising at this age. We also find that confirmation to the RIASEC increases from late adolescence into the late-twenties, suggesting familiarity with the world of work is driving the hexagon representation as young adults become more invested in their roles at work. Conversely, we find that as workers near retirement age, confirmation to the circumplex tends to decrease, suggesting workers closer to retirement begin to deinvest from the world of work. This study makes three contributions to previous research. First, we examine the structural validity of the RIASEC using the full range of a typical career span from late adolescence to retirement. Second, we show how the life roles that people invest in (e.g., their careers) or deinvest from (e.g., their retirement) can influence their perception of the world of work and corresponding to their mental representation of the RIASEC. Finally, our results highlight how certain age markers can influence how individuals view their place in the world of work. Implications for career counselling in students, mid career transitions in professionals, and lateral promotions with organizations are discussed. References available upon request from Wei Ming Jonathan Phan (Jonathan.phan@csulb.edu).

KEY WORDS

Working age, RIASEC, structural stability

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