

## Motivation Scale Background and Scoring Guide

Donna L. Sundre (2000)

Center for Assessment and Research Studies

James Madison University

Standardized tests play an important role in providing interested parties with information concerning student achievement and growth. When test results are analyzed, score interpretations are often questioned on several fronts: it is possible that a lack of motivation to perform well on these tests may produce scores that are spuriously low. When performances are lower than expected, many stakeholders, generally relying on anecdotal evidence, insist that these low results are due to lack of motivation. The true meaning of test scores remains in question. Are the scores lower than the students' true achievement level, or is the observed performance an accurate indication of achievement? In either case, the lack of validity information quiets the conversation and perhaps stifles needed reform. Rarely is a measure of motivation available to help inform interpretations. Lack of motivation may present a potential threat to appropriate interpretation of score meaning. Knowing how large a threat it represents would be very useful. Researchers have been interested in trying to gauge examinee motivation in a variety of testing conditions to explore the presence and magnitude of this potential source of score bias.

Wolf and Smith (1995) published the first version of the motivation scale. This scale consisted of eight items and was considered unidimensional. Other researchers using the scale often found two orthogonal factors that seemed to measure Importance (five items) and Effort (three items). Sundre (1999) revised the original scale by adding two items and modifying the wording of others in an effort to further delineate and

strengthen the two factors. The revised Motivation Scale, the Student Opinion Scale (SOS) is comprised of 10 items using a five-point likert scale ranging from 1 “Strongly Disagree” to 5 “Strongly Agree.” Responses to items are summed to form three scores: Total Motivation; Importance, and Effort. Four of the ten items (3, 4, 7, and 9) should be reverse coded prior to scoring and analysis. The Total Motivation score is determined by summing responses to all ten items. The Importance scale, derived by summing responses to items 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8, provides a measure of the personal relevance of the test to the examinee. The remaining items, 2, 6, 7, 9, and 10, form the Effort scale, designed to measure of the level of effort students engaged in during the assessment task. Note that students must have legitimate responses to all items comprising a scale to have a score computed. Higher scores are indicative of greater self-reports of motivation.

This scale has been used in a variety of testing conditions, and we welcome your use of the scale. We are hopeful you will provide us with additional findings and contribute to more understanding of examinee motivation.

For more information, please contact CARS at

[assessment@jmu.edu](mailto:assessment@jmu.edu)

or call: (540) 568-6706

#### References

- Sundre, D.L. (1999). [manuscript is currently under review for publication] Does examinee motivation moderate the relationship between test consequences and test performance? Paper presented at AERA annual conference. Montreal, Canada.
- Wolf, L. F. and Smith, J. K. (1995). The consequence of consequence: Motivation, anxiety, and test performance. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 8 (3), 227-242.

### Student Opinion Scale

Please think about the test that you just completed. Mark the answer that best represents how you feel about each of the statements below.

A = Strongly Disagree

B = Disagree

C = Neutral

D = Agree

E = Strongly Agree

1. Doing well on this test was important to me.
2. I engaged in good effort throughout this test.
3. I am not curious about how I did on this test relative to others. \*
4. I am not concerned about the score I receive on this test. \*
5. This was an important test to me.
6. I gave my best effort on this test.
7. While taking this test, I could have worked harder on it. \*
8. I would like to know how well I did on this test.
9. I did not give this test my full attention while completing it. \*
10. While taking this test, I was able to persist to completion of the task.

\* Denotes items that are reversed prior to scoring.