

Your Attention Please! Careless Responding as a Threat to Data Quality

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Questions I'll Address

- What is careless responding and how is it measured?
- Does careless responding occur in applied samples?
- What are the causes of careless responding?
- How can careless responding be prevented?

What is Careless Responding?

- Participants may respond to self-report questionnaires without closely reading the questionnaire content.
- Several labels have been used for this behavior:
 - “Careless responding” (Meade & Craig, 2012)
 - “Insufficient effort responding” (Huang et al., 2012)
 - “Participant inattention” (Maniaci & Rogge, 2014)

What are the Effects of Careless Responding?

- Careless responding has several undesirable effects:
 - It can attenuate observed correlations (McGrath, Mitchell, Kim, & Hough, 2010)
 - It can inflate observed correlations (Huang, Liu, & Bowling, 2015)
 - It can bias the results of factor analyses (Schmitt & Stults, 1985)

How is Careless Responding Measured?

- Several indices have been used to assess careless responding (see Curran, 2015; Meade & Craig, 2012):
 - Infrequency indices
 - Inconsistency indices
 - Longstring indices
 - Multivariate outlier analysis
 - Page time
 - Self-reported carelessness

Does Careless Responding Occur Often Enough to Matter?

- A small amount of careless responding (e.g., 10%) is sufficient to produce undesirable effects (Huang et al., 2015).
- Using a student sample, Meade and Craig (2012) estimated that 10% to 12% of participants responded carelessly.

Is Careless Responding Present within Applied Datasets?

- Berry et al. (1992) found that 53% of police recruits responded carelessly to at least some items in a personality test battery.
- Bowling et al. (2016, Study 1) found evidence of careless responding among job incumbents.
- Blackmore, Camus, Bowling, and Burns (2015, Study 3) found evidence of careless responding among job applicants.

What Causes Careless Responding?

- Meade and Craig (2012) speculated about four potential causes of careless responding:
 - Questionnaire length
 - Lack of researcher-participant social contact
 - Participant indifference
 - Environmental distractions

What can be done to Prevent Careless Responding?

- Incentives for responding carefully (Huang et al., 2012)
- Identified questionnaires (Meade & Craig, 2012)
- Real or simulated social contact (Ward & Pond, 2015)

Thank you for your attention!



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