

Are People Equivalently Healthy in Different Surveys? A Comparison of ISSP and EASS

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In cross-national/cross cultural surveys, questionnaire design is important to ensure measurement invariance, and which mainly include question wordings and response scales. While researchers can modify the scales, for example the number of response category and associated labels, based on specific purposes. The response distributions may, in turn, change.

In internationally collaborated survey projects, such as ISSP, questionnaires are standardized so every participating country that conducts the same module uses the one and only source questionnaire. Surveys that focus on specific regions or countries, such as East Asian Social Survey (EASS) may have different concerns or preference for the design of response scales. For countries that collect data on the same question items for different survey projects, it is interesting to see their responses to different design of scales.

This study aims to understand the different designs of response scales and to compare their effects on an outcome variable. Data for this study are drawn from the 2011 ISSP and the 2010 EASS. Both datasets are on Health module and address the issues of health and health care. The datasets also cover the same countries that participated in both survey projects, including China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. General happiness, which is one of the item with different response scales, is used as the outcome variable. While other issues of survey methodology are not taken into account in this study, the findings are expect to encourage discussion on questionnaire design in cross-national/cross cultural research.