

Dependence of Reported Height and Weight on Interviewers' Characteristics

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Thank you

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Context

- F2F mode of recruitment and data collection is possibly the most reliable mode of data collection, in part due to the immediate human interaction between interviewer and respondent
 - Higher cooperation
 - Low number of partially completed interviews
 - Longer and more challenging questionnaires
 - Higher response rates
- The same human interaction which brings the benefits, also results in the drawbacks
 - Stronger social desirability bias compared with other modes
 - Especially non-interviewer administered

Interviewers' Impact

- Impact of interviewers' on survey responses has been studied for a long time now
- Several studies looked at the the impact of interviewers' visible characteristics, such as race, gender and age on the survey responses.
- Additionally, further studies looking at the interviewers' attitudes and their influence on the survey responses
 - By asking the interviewers to complete the survey questionnaire
 - Many studies find correlations between interviewers' attitudes and respondents reported attitudes
 - Proving causal relation is not as straightforward due to the clustering of f2f fieldwork and interviewers usually working in assigned areas/clusters

Pretext

- In a recent survey conducted for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, respondents were asked about their height and weight
- Survey: Life in Transition III, covering nearly 50,000 f2f interviews in 33 countries. Coverage of post-communist countries, from Mongolia to Hungary, plus Turkey, Italy, Germany.
- Respondents asked to report on their height and weight. It is used to work out nutritional information and development
- We decided to collect the same information from interviewers to test whether there is any relation between interviewer characteristics and respondents' reported height and weight
- We matched the interviewers' characteristics with the interviews they conducted: age, gender, height and weight

Hypotheses

- Interviewers' weight and respondents' weight are correlated
- Interviewers' height and respondents' height are correlated
- The interviewer gender impacts on the respondents' reported height and weight
- The interviewer age impacts on the respondents' reported height and weight

Challenges

- People don't always like answering these questions
 - About 12% missing data in reported weight.
 - 11% in reported height
- Not always do they like *asking* these questions
 - Missing data to an extent clustered by interviewers
- And people used to *asking* questions don't like *answering* questions
 - Agencies in several countries asked not to provide this information about their interviewers
- Additionally, analytical complication is that there is understandable variation in physical characteristics across different ethnicities. Thus, if taken internationally, taller interviewers will be handling taller respondents and vice versa

Relation between Interviewers' height and Respondents height

- A certain degree of correlation between the heights!
- But only at the international level
- When taken at country level, no correlation whatsoever
- Same for weight
- Negative results, publication bias

Impact of Interviewer Gender on Respondent Height

- No clear pattern
- As the next step, we split to analyse male and female respondents separately
- Still, no impact on the male respondents' height
- However, women do report a little bigger height with male interviewers

Impact of Interviewer Gender on Respondent Weight

- Analysis by respondent gender
- For men – certain differences within countries.
 - However, no clear pattern
- For women – certain differences within countries
 - However, no clear pattern

Impact of Interviewer Age on Respondent Weight

- Initial analysis by correlation did not return any clear picture
- As a second stage, divided the age into broad brackets: 18-34, 35-54, 55+
- A clearer pattern of more socially desirable responses to the younger group of respondents
- Particular challenge of interviewers not evenly spread across age groups, with substantial variation country by country (mainly younger ones in some, opposite in others).
- Hence, analysis by age only meaningful in a subset of countries

Impact of Interviewer Age on Respondent Weight

- The impact of age on male respondents weight – no clear pattern
- The impact of age on female respondents weight – women are much lighter with younger respondents

Impact of Interviewer Age on Respondent Height

- The impact of age on male respondents height – men are taller with younger interviewers.
 - Not consistently in all countries though
- The impact of age on female respondents height – no clear pattern and no consistent results

Conclusions

- Interviewers height and weight and respondents height and weight not related
- Interviewers age and gender seem to impact on the reported height and weight
- Respondents seem to be more affected by the social desirability bias when interviewed by the interviewers of the opposite sex
- Same is true of younger interviewers
- However, no single pattern emerged for all or majority of countries
- Further analysis to focus on within country results

Next steps

- The analysis of relation between interviewers' height and weight and respondents' height and weight seems to be dead end
- Reported height and weight are influenced by the respondents' age (not interviewers' age). We may look into controlling for the respondents' age
- There is natural variation in the socio-demographic profile of the fieldforce across agencies and countries
 - Due to the structure and profile of labour force, historic reasons, engagement of older people, labour legislation and many other factors
 - We need to think of the way to control for it, and possibly create a more sensitive scale for interviewers characteristics
 - Focus on broader brackets for interviewers' age. It may be useful to find a cutting point below which social desirability matters, and above which it does not

Next steps

- Social desirability bias on reported height and weight will naturally vary between cultures. Expected perceptions of the male and female body vary in different cultures
 - Eg much less pressure on the weight of men in traditional cultures
- Clustering countries into socio-cultural hubs, to identify any trends unique to hubs

Thank you

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