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Survey research is one of the most widely used methods of data collection in the social sciences. Survey instruments allow researchers to gather information from a large number of respondents at a relatively low cost. The usefulness of the data collected from survey instruments is largely dependent upon the nature of the scales developed to gather the information. In Scale Development, Devellis provides a practical guide for the development of scales for use in survey research.

Scale Development is divided into seven chapters, taking the reader from the beginning phases of scale development through the validation of constructed scales. Devellis begins with a discussion of the measurement process, key concepts, historical context and the importance of measurement in the social sciences.

In Chapter Two, an important distinction is made between the constructs that researchers wish to measure and the measurement scales used to measure them. Devellis discusses the measurement of "latent variables" or constructs and the ability to further understand these variables as relationships with other known variables are examined. Simplified path diagrams are used to illustrate such relationships.

The concepts of reliability and validity are addressed in Chapters Three and Four. Devellis frames these concepts within the classical test theory model. The primary discussion of reliability focuses appropriately on the estimation of internal consistency reliability—specifically coefficient alpha. Additional classical reliability procedures such as test-retest and alternative forms are also discussed. The applicability of generalizability theory is only briefly mentioned, however, the reader is directed to additional references for more complete discussions of this procedure. Three types of validity discussed in Chapter Four include content, criterion-related, and construct. Each type of validity is only briefly examined and the reader is referred to additional sources for a more
comprehensive discussion. The most extensive treatment is given to construct validity and revisited later in Chapter 6 in the discussion of factor analytic techniques.

Perhaps the most valuable chapter in this book is Chapter Five. This chapter offers the reader an easy to follow format which includes an eight-step guideline for the development and pilot testing of survey scales. Practical suggestions are made to help define the variable(s) or construct(s) that the researcher is interested in measuring, generate a pool of items related to the variable(s) or construct(s), and determine which type of measurement scale should be used in this measurement process.

Chapter Five also provides a general overview of the major types of measurement scales such as Thurstone, Guttman, Likert, and Semantic Differential. The discussion of these specific types of scales is limited, but enough to provide the reader with a general idea of the scale format and use. This section would be strengthened with additional examples from the research and evaluation literature. The reader is occasionally referred to Nunnally (1978) for further psychometric assistance. No references to other useful sources such as Edwards (1957), and Guilford (1954) are made.

The remainder of the fifth chapter emphasizes the importance of pilot testing, validating, and critically evaluating scale items before the final scale is administered. This section is well organized and clearly presented so that it can be easily understood by the evaluation practitioner or first time scale developer.

Chapter Six provides a general discussion of factor analysis techniques. This chapter describes the usefulness of factor analysis in assessing the dimensionality of the scale. What construct(s) are measured by the set of scale items? This chapter is enriched with a clear conceptual presentation of factor extraction, rotation procedures, factor structure interpretation, and factorial validity.

The final chapter is a very brief overview of the conditions under which scales are administered, analyzed, and interpreted. Practical considerations, such as the mode (i.e. questionnaire, telephone) and the context (i.e. placement of scale within the overall measurement instrument) of administration are introduced. A limited discussion of analysis and interpretation issues is also included. Devellis recommends additional sources for a more comprehensive discussion of these issues (Dillman, 1978; Lavrakas, 1987; Fowler & Mangione, 1989).

After using this book as part of a graduate class in scale construction this past spring quarter, I recommend its use with supplementary references from the research and evaluation literature. Some of these supplementary references are cited by Devellis. Additional sources are necessary in order to provide a more comprehensive treatment of scale development and the survey research process.

In general, Scale Development is very readable, well organized, and straightforward. Students have found Chapters Five and Six most helpful. Chapter Five provided them with a general framework from which to construct their specific survey instruments. Students specifically commented on the clarity in which the material on factor analysis was presented in Chapter Six.

I would recommend this book for practitioners, graduate students, and faculty members who are seeking a practical, rather than a psychometric, treatment of scale development. This book offers a clear overview for those interested in the development and validation of measurement scales.
REFERENCES


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