Assignment Three: Correlational Study

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Research Methods in Social Psychology

Assignment Three

*Problem 1: research setting and research participants*

In this study, we will propose a cross-sectional survey. The data is collected through direct questioning of participants with self-report questionnaires. The questionnaires are administered via the Internet. We will use the online survey tool called SurveyMonkey. This survey tool usually is free. In this study, the research participants will be the public high school teachers from New York State. First, all high schools within each region (e.g., Western New York, Finger Lakes, Southern Tier, Central New York, Mohawk Valley, Capital District, Hudson Valley, New York City, and Long Island) were divided into hierarchies based on location (urban, rural, suburban). For different regions and different locations, we randomly sample one school. We will contact the principals of these schools and ask them to provide the roster of the teachers in the school (mainly their email).

When the questionnaires are distributed, respondents can complete them as time allows. So that they do not need to face the pressure to provide immediate responses. Because this study is directly related to participants' personal opinions about their job, we guarantee that no personal records (e.g., name or social security number) or any other private information will be kept for all participants. The data will be collected anonymously.

For an online survey in which there is no prior relationship with the recipients, the response rate usually is about 20% to 30 %. We are planning to collect about 400 valid responses. To improve the response rate, we take three strategies: (1) all participants who complete the survey will have a chance to take a free lottery with 10% probability to win a 10-dollar Amazon gift card; (2) we will distribute about 2,000 questionnaires, so that more people will be covered; (3) For the participants who do not get response, we will redistribute the same survey again every one week and up to three-time in total.

The reasons for using this data collection approach are: (1) low cost of data collections; (2) relatively low interviewer bias; (3) participants will have high anonymity. However, we also notice that the questionnaire approach also has the limitation of (1) low respondents' rate; (2) relatively low sample quality, unless we can ensure high response rate; (3) relative low tolerance to long questionnaires. The reason that we pick public high school teachers is that: (1) these participants are usually well-educated. We can ensure their understanding of the questions. (2) It is easier to take a random sampling method. The representativeness of data could be improved. However, since we fix the teacher population, we cannot clearly distinguish the effects of the job position. This may increase the selection bias.

*Problem 2: operationalizations of both IV and DV*

In this study, the independent variable in this study is perceived discrimination, and the dependent variable is participants' degree of the intention of withdrawing from work. All items for both IV and DV, I will use five-level Likert scale, so that we can: (1) avoid the identification issues the participants face if we use many levels in Likert scale, (2) easier to calculate other metrics (e.g., validity and reliability) since the scale is the same.

* The items that I will used in the questionnaire for measuring perceived discrimination will include:

1. In the workplace, you are treated with less respect than other people?

Always Very often Sometimes Rarely Never

1. In the workplace, people act as if they think you are not smart?

Always Very often Sometimes Rarely Never

1. In the workplace, you are harassed?

Always Very often Sometimes Rarely Never

* The items that I will used in the questionnaire for degree of intention of withdrawing from work will include:

1. Do you want to give my best whenever I am at work?

Always Very often Sometimes Rarely Never

1. I recommend my school to others?

Always Very often Sometimes Rarely Never

1. I can see how my work affects the schools’ overall success?

Always Very often Sometimes Rarely Never

*Problem 3: control variables (covariates)*

In this study, the covariates that we want to include: (1) age of participants (18-24, 25-39, 40-60, and above 60), and (2) education of participants (high school; bachelor; master; Ph.D. or higher; trade school).

These covariates are likely to explain participants’ degree of the intention of withdrawing from their work. For example, older teachers (who may have served the same school for decades) usually want to keep working in the same place. Besides, they have rich experience in handling the issues happening in the school, and stronger psychological abilities to face the difficulties in their career than the young teachers. Similarly, teachers will higher education may have more professional knowledge than those less educated to fix their daily problems, and more willing to prove themselves in their work.

*Problem 4:*

If the hypothesis was supported, we should see there is a general high positive correlation between the measurements of IV (perceived discrimination) and measurements DV (degree of the intention of withdrawing from work). For example, the smallest correlation coefficients between the measurements of IV and measurements of DV is more significant than 0.7. The more that high school teachers perceive discrimination in the workplace, the more they are likely to have a higher intention of withdrawing from their work.

If the hypothesis was rejected, IV and DV could be irrelated or negatively related.

• No matter how much discrimination the high school teachers perceived, they are equally likely to withdraw from their work. The correlation coefficients between the measurements of IV and measurements of DV are all between -0.1 and 0.1.

• The less than high school teachers perceive discrimination in the workplace, the more they are likely to have a higher intention of withdrawing from their work. The most significant correlation coefficients between the measurements of IV and measurements of DV is smaller than -0.7.

*Problem 5:*

Generally, there are four possible reasons for “no results significant”:

1. Theory failure: the hypothesis is wrong. It means that even with the more reliable data set, better survey design, the result will still be “no results significant.” This is very less likely to happen since the hypothesis is agreed with our common sense.

2. Data failure: the data we collected is not representative or even misleading. For example, only the high school teachers who have strong psychological qualities are sampled. They all indeed perceive discrimination in the workplace, but they are strong and determined in their work and never give up. Meanwhile, we select the high school teachers in New York. Even though we use the random sampling techniques, it still will have problem of selection bias. If we can take the survey for a larger population with different job types, it will help to reduce the systematic error in sample selection.

3. Survey failure: the measurement we constructed in this survey is not designed properly. For example, the questions are double-barreled or not relevant, so that the participants do not interpret the items as what we hope. Or, the questions are too threatening and over-demanding, so that participants do not want to tell the truth.

4. Missing covariate or alternative explanations which is significant. If we missing the systematic noise, it will affect the model results.

In summary, if there are validly or reliability issues of the study, it could make the result insignificant.

*Problem 6: alternative explanations*

One alternative explanation that would be possible if the data did support the hypothesis is the psychologically sensitive level of the participants. For the ones who are psychologically sensitive, they are more likely to perceives discrimination in the workplace. Sometimes, they may even misinterpret other people’s behavior and take some common reaction as a signal of insult. For example, the principal may want to kindly remind the teacher that he/she needs to care about the poor performance of students in the assessment. A sensitive person may take that as a personal slander.

Meanwhile, those who are sensitive may be more likely to have trouble with other people. Thus, they may be depressed when they need to collaborate with other teachers. They are more likely to withdraw from their work. In summary, the psychologically sensitive level is can both affect the perceived discrimination and the participants’ intention degree of withdrawing from their work.