**GESIS** ⬝ P.O. Box 12 21 55 ⬝ 68072 Mannheim ⬝ GERMANY

Mannheim, 2024-01-09

**Title:** **“How to reduce Item Nonresponse in Face-to-Face Surveys? A Review and Evidence from the European Social Survey”**

Dear Dr. Grönemann,

Thank you for submitting your manuscript “How to reduce Item Nonresponse in Face-to-Face Surveys? A Review and Evidence from the European Social Survey” to MDA. Your revision has been send to the original reviewers. It has now been reviewed by three of the original reviewers(reviewer F, C and D) and the MDA editor. On the basis of their reports, we are pleased to inform you that the Editorial Board of MDA has decided to accept your manuscript for publication, conditional on you satisfactorily addressing the issues raised. Your manuscript has greatly improved and has now been assigned the status *minor revision.* Please note that although you are close to publication, the current status of “minor revision” does not automatically imply final acceptance for publication.

One reviewer did not have any additional comment and advised acceptance. Another reviewer just had minor comments that can be easily resolved. We have added the annotated pdf with the comments of this reviewer. The second reviewer, who was initially the most critical, still has some questions. Please address these.

You will find the reports of the editor and the critical reviewer enclosed. We look forward to receiving your revision. When submitting, please include a separate detailed list of how you acted on the suggestions made by the reviewers and editor.

Thank you for your cooperation and for giving us the opportunity to consider your work.

Sincerely,

Edith de Leeuw

**Associate Editor’s Report**

The manuscript has been carefully rewritten and the author has addressed much of the criticism that the reviewers raised. All five original reviewers were sent the revised manuscript. Three responded. One reviewer responded with only the words ‘advise acceptance now’, the second with the advice ‘acceptance/minor revision’. This second reviewer also provided an annotated pdf with some minor comments, that all can be easily incorporated in the final text. The third reviewer (reviewer D in the first round of reviews) is partly satisfied, but still has some questions/comments.

Some of these (a, b, c, 4, 5, and 7) can be addressed in the text. Most are either a language question and/or need some more explaining. Other comments (d, 2, 5, 6) can be addressed in the discussion. Comment 3 about the formula needs some attention, in the answers accompanying the revised manuscript, the author states, that the formula is not a n actual statistical formula but a help in summarizing and defining interrelationships between concept. **This should be very clearly stated in the text!**  And perhaps the word formula should be omitted. Perhaps something like ‘the interrelationship between the concepts can be formalized as…’ or something similar in the own words of author. Now it still looks like an actual statistical formula.

I suggest that the author carefully goes over the text again. I further suggest that the author then does not try to answer the critique immediately, but instead tries to understand why the point was made. Often it is a miscommunication between author and reviewer. In most cases the reviewer does not understand what the author means. The author should wonder why and try to explain it better. After all, if an expert like the reviewer does not understand it correctly, than an average reader of MDA will have problems understanding it too.

**Report of Reviewer**

I appreciate an opportunity to review the revised version of “How to reduce Item Nonresponse in

Face-to-Face Surveys? A Review and Evidence from the European Social Survey.” While I commend the author(s) for addressing some comments, I still find the following requiring the authors’ attention.

1. Language issues

There are many parts very challenging to understand. Some examples include:

* 1. “In the following sections, I will therefore not distinguish between them even though they may have varying strengths of predictors (Silber et al., 2021)” on p. 4 – what are they?
  2. “Questions that are open-ended or allow for multiple options and ordering of categories are more likely to result in higher nonresponse rates” on p.9. This does not provide what these question types are being compared to. Hence, it is impossible to know what this sentence means.
  3. “The question level is very well understood and constitutes the largest part of the variance in item nonresponse.” on p. 9. What is “the question level”?
  4. “To make it easier for language minorities, the questionnaire can be provided

in multiple languages. But this can be costly and may affect the comparability

of cases.” on p. 10. I simply do not understand the logic here. Also, cite the source for the second sentence.

1. My previous comments about item nonresponse with the editing stage has not been address. The paper still asserts, “When editing an answer, respondents may have concerns about their privacy.” on p.6. Respondent may have privacy concerns when hearing the questions, far before reaching the editing stage.
2. I understand that now the authors provide the clarification of not using P\_{INR} in the analysis. Given that, I don’t find the formula for P\_{INR} necessary for introducing the four concepts that are the core of this paper. It is unfortunately distracting. Further, without a quantification of difficulty/(ability\*motivation) and privacy, you certainly cannot solve the max function involving these two terms.
3. “Expectation” column in Table 1. Expectation for what? Expectation in nonresponse or nonresponse reduction?
4. “Interferences and other people being present during the interview as well as whether respondent and interviewer have matching gender can be regarded as unrelated to any of the four theoretical concepts outlined in the model.” on p.16 Why?
5. The authors mention that they will not speaking causal effect on p. 17. Then, what is this paper for? The paper proposes the four concepts as “sources” of item nonresponse, which implicitly suggests a causal mechanism.
6. “Standard errors are clustered by the interviewer” on p. 18. Standard errors cannot be clustered. Please clarify.