GESIS Summer School in Survey Methodology 2023

Syllabus for course: “Pretesting Survey Questions”

Lecturers: Cornelia Neuert Timo Lenzner
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Date: 02 – 04 August 2023
Time: 09:00-12:00 + 13:00-14:00 CEST
Venue: Online via Zoom

About the Lecturers:
Cornelia Neuert is a social scientist and head of the team Questionnaire Design & Evaluation at GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. She has been working as research associate in the GESIS pretesting unit since April 2012. Together with the staff of the pretesting unit, she has conducted numerous cognitive pretests for various research projects and survey programs. Her research focuses on methods for testing and evaluating survey questionnaires and questionnaire design.

Timo Lenzner is a senior researcher in the cognitive pretesting unit at GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. Since joining the pretesting unit in 2012, he has conducted cognitive pretests for several large-scale survey programs, including the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), and the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), as well as for more than 40 national research projects. His research focuses on developing good questionnaires and improving pretesting methods.

Selected Publications:

Course Description:
The course covers the basic elements of evaluating questionnaires and highlights the general importance of carrying out (cognitive) pretests before fielding a questionnaire. This is achieved through both lectures and group exercises. In the lectures, we introduce three pretesting approaches, namely questionnaire appraisal systems, cognitive interviewing, and web probing. The exercises aim at familiarizing participants with these pretesting methods. We focus on the sorts of information gathered by each method and how the information can be used to reduce...
measurement error. In this context, we will also discuss the pros and cons of the different pretesting methods and mixed-method approaches. Besides a more general introduction of the pretesting approaches, participants will receive practical advice on how to conduct (cognitive) pretesting projects and how to decide which pretesting methods should be selected in a given research situation.

**Keywords:**

**Course Prerequisites:**
- Basic knowledge in questionnaire design; however, some practical experience in conducting surveys will be beneficial.
- There are no statistical prerequisites.

**Target Group:**
Participants will find the course useful if:
- they develop their own questionnaires for own data collection.
- they work in a survey organization and work on questionnaire design and evaluation.
- they use survey data and wish to understand the importance of pretesting to reduce measurement error.

**Course and Learning Objectives:**
By the end of the course participants will:
- be familiar with current (cognitive) pretesting methods.
- know the pros and cons of the different approaches to test survey questions.
- be able to make an informed decision about when to use which pretesting method and the ways in which several methods can be combined within a pretesting project.
- be able to evaluate survey questions using the selected methods.

**Organizational Structure of the Course:**
- This is a three-day course with a total amount of 12 hours of virtual class time. The course structure includes 3 hours of in-class teaching in the morning with a mix of teaching and exercises, and Q&A sessions. Exercises will be divided in group and individual exercises.
- During the group exercises, lecturers will be available to support in the breakout rooms.
- After the lunch break, we will discuss the exercises and be available for group and individual consultations (Q&A session).

**Software and Hardware Requirements:**
Participants need a laptop/desktop computer that enables them to access the internet.

**Day-to-day Schedule and Literature:**

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<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
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| 1   | Introduction  
\> Reasons for conducting pretests and goals of pretesting  
\> Overview over different pretesting methods  
\> Expert Review & Questionnaire Appraisal Systems  
\> Different forms of expert reviews  
\> Exercise on application of QAS-99  
\> Q&A Session |

_Suggested reading:_

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Cognitive interviewing
- Planning cognitive interviews + Exercise
- Conducting & analyzing cognitive interviews + Exercise
Supplementing cognitive interviewing with eye tracking

Suggested reading:

Web Probing
- Introduction to web probing
- Optimal implementation: Visual design, probe order, nonresponse reduction
- Planning & conducting web probing studies
- Analyzing web probing studies + Exercise
Discussion of advantages and disadvantages of the different pretesting methods

Suggested reading:

Preparatory Reading:

Additional Recommended Literature: