Likert Scale

Saul McLeod, published 2008

Various kinds of rating scales have been developed to measure attitudes directly (i.e. the person knows their attitude is being studied). The most widely used is the Likert Scale.

Likert (1932) developed the principle of measuring attitudes by asking people to respond to a series of statements about a topic, in terms of the extent to which they agree with them, and so tapping into the cognitive and affective components of attitudes.

Likert-type or frequency scales use fixed choice response formats and are designed to measure attitudes or opinions (Bowling, 1997; Burns, & Grove, 1997). These ordinal scales measure levels of agreement/disagreement.

A Likert-type scale assumes that the strength/intensity of experience is linear, i.e. on a continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and makes the assumption that attitudes can be measured. Respondents may be offered a choice of five to seven or even nine pre-coded responses with the neutral point being neither agree nor disagree.

In it final form, the Likert Scale is a five (or seven) point scale which is used to allow the individual to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement.

For example:

> I believe that ecological questions are the most important issues facing human beings today.

Strongly agree / agree / don't know / disagree / strongly disagree

Each of the five (or seven) responses would have a numerical value which would be used to measure the attitude under investigation.

Likert Scale Examples

Agreement	Frequency
• Strongly Agree • Agree • Undecided • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	• Very Frequently • Frequently • Occasionally • Rarely • Never

Importance	Likelihood

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Of Little Importance
- Unimportant

- Almost Always True
- Usually True
- Occasionally True
- Usually Not True
- Almost Never True

How can you analyze data from a Likert Scale?

• Summarize using a median or a mode (not a mean); the mode is probably the most suitable for easy interpretation.

• Display the distribution of observations in a bar chart (it can't be a histogram, because the data is not continuous).

Critical Evaluation

Likert Scales have the **advantage** that they do not expect a simple yes / no answer from the respondent, but rather allow for degrees of opinion, and even no opinion at all. Therefore quantitative data is obtained, which means that the data can be analyzed with relative ease.

However, like all surveys, the validity of Likert Scale attitude measurement can be compromised due **social desirability**. This means that individuals may lie to put themselves in a positive light. For example, if a likert scale was measuring discrimination, who would admit to being racist?

Offering **anonymity** on self-administered questionnaires should further reduce social pressure, and thus may likewise reduce social desirability bias. Paulhus (1984) found that more desirable personality characteristics were reported when people were asked to write their names, addresses and telephone numbers on their questionnaire than when they told not to put identifying information on the questionnaire.

References

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