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What is the Influence of Scale Format? A Study on the Likert and Visual Analogue Scale

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Abstract

Scales are widely used to evaluate subjective dimensions in questionnaires. Two main formats are used: Likert scales and Visual Analogue Scales (VAS). Previous studies have shown mixed results regarding which format to favor. The aim of the current study is to compare formats and presentation types for each type of scale. 658 participants participated in the study and completed a trust scale. Several characteristics of scales (e.g., valence of anchors) were explored, and 11 formats of scales were compared. The results show that participants' responses were different according to the type of scale (i.e., Likert or VAS), the initial cursor's position in the VAS, and the anchors' valence in the VAS. Differences in terms of reliability were found between VAS formats and the number of categories in Likert scales. These findings suggest that the scale format is crucial and may influence data collection as well as suggesting related conclusions.