

## **Effect of Branching Middle Responses in Dichotomous Polar Scales in Web Surveys**

In telephone surveys, 11 to 49% of respondents would select a middle alternative when it is offered although they would not volunteer it if it were not mentioned in dichotomous bipolar questions. Furthermore, offering a middle option led to differences in response effects that are related to respondent characteristics, including social desirability bias and satisficing effects. While a question form that branches middle responses has been shown to have a lower validity compared to offered form in telephone surveys, potentially, branched question form can motivate respondents to spend extra time and effort in giving a response in the absence of an interviewer. Therefore, differences in validity and reliability of responses to branched question form compared to offered form is a research interest in general population web surveys. This study tests the validity and the reliability to branched question form in a general population survey using a randomized experiment. The branched question form did not change validity and reliability of responses and reduced the satisficing behavior based on the proxies compared to the offered form.

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