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Toharudin, Toni

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Chapter 4
Measuring Authoritarianism with Different Sets of Items in a Longitudinal Study

Toni Toharudin, Johan H.L. Oud

Jaak B. Billiet, and Henk Folmer

In the General Election Study in Belgium (Interuniversitair Steunpunt Politieke-Opinieonderzoek K.U. Leuven, 1991, 1995, and 1999), authoritarianism was measured in each of the wave years 1991, 1995, 1999 by seven items. However, only two items were the same in all of the three waves. A series of congenericness tests as proposed by Jöreskog (1971, 1974) is performed to find out which of the items in each of the waves can be considered to measure the same latent variable and can therefore be used in a longitudinal study to assess the development of authoritarianism over time. We find that three of the items in 1999 did not pass the congenericness test convincingly.

4.1 Introduction

Authoritarianism is a form of social behavior characterized by strict obedience to the authority of a state or organization and adherence to enforcing and maintaining control through the use of oppressive measures. It refers to a complex of nine sub-syndromes (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950), of which conventionalism (strict adherence to conventional values), aggression and submission are the most important (Meloen, 1991). The sub-syndromes explain why authoritarian people tend to look down on (contra-identify) and discriminate social or ethnic groups that are 'different'. Authoritarianism is part of a broader cluster of cultural conservative attitudes, especially vivid within the lower social classes (Meloen & Middendorp, 1985; De Witte, 1990). Scheepers, Felling, and Peters (1992) argue that a sociological explanation for an authoritarian attitude lies within the need for compensation for political powerlessness, caused by unfavorable social circumstances.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify sets of items that adequately measure authoritarianism in Flandres, Belgium across time. Typical for the data to be analyzed is that different sets of items are used to measure authoritarianism in 1991, 1995, and 1999. In the chapter we present an approach that consistently measures the latent variable authoritarianism, i.e. makes sure that the same latent variable authoritarianism is measured across time, although the item sets show only partial overlap. A paper by Billiet and de Witte (2008) also ascertained that different sets of items were used to measure authoritarianism in 1991 and 1999 and that the scale in 1991 was not completely comparable to the scale that was used in 1999. However, because in this study the autoregression of authoritarianism across time was not part of the analysis and the cross-sectional analysis of 1991 was just repeated in 1999, it was less urgent to make a selection of the variables that can be proven to measure the same underlying latent variable.

Earlier the relationships between individualism, ethnocentrism, and nationalism were analyzed by means of the approximate discrete model (ADM) in continuous time (Toharudin, Oud, & Billiet, 2008). The present chapter preludes to a follow up study that adds authoritarianism as a fourth central latent variable to the model and simultaneously analyzes the causal relationships among the four latent variables in continuous time by means of the ADM as well as the exact discrete model EDM (Oud & Jansen, 2000).

4.2 General Election Study

In the General Election Study, Belgium, survey data were collected in 1991, 1995 and 1999 by the Inter-University Centre ISPO-PIOP (Universities of Leuven and Louvain-La-Neuve). The samples analyzed here (a similar procedure was used for the Walloon region) consist of two types of respondents: (i) Flemish respondents, and (ii) Dutch speaking

respondents of the Brussels-Capital Region. The sample of the Flemish respondents was a two stage sample. In the first stage, equally sized sets of secondary sampling units were randomly assigned to municipalities (primary sampling units) with probabilities proportional to the population of registered voters within the municipalities. In the second stage, the secondary sampling units (respondents) were randomly selected within the communities from population registers.

The procedure followed in the Brussels-Capital Region was somewhat different from that followed in the Flemish (and Walloon) regions. Particularly, most of the 19 municipalities (communes) in the Brussels-Capital Region refused permission to draw a sample from the National Register because of the political situation with regard to the language communities. In addition, it was (and is) illegal to have official lists of the Flemish and French speaking inhabitants of Brussels (for details see Interuniversitair Steunpunt Politieke-Opinieonderzoek K.U. Leuven ,1991, 1995, and 1999).

The analyses presented below are based on a panel of 1274 respondents (1239 from Flanders and 35 from from the Brussels-Captial Region) who were interviewed three times. Authoritarianism was measured in each of the wave years 1991, 1995, 1999 by 7 items.

Respondents were asked to indicate their answer on a 5-point scale: "Completely agree" (1), "Agree" (2), "Neither agree nor disagree" (3), "Disagree" (4), "Completely disagree" (5). **Table 4.1** gives the items for each year as well as the percentage distributions of the responses. All item distributions are acceptable in that they are unimodal and not extremely skewed. Particularly, each item has one or more lower frequencies at the left and right of the mode.

Table 4.1 Authoritarianism items in 1991, 1995, 1999[10]

ITEM		Answers (%)					
Label	1991	1	2	3	4	5	Total
at191	Obedience and respect for authority are the two most important virtues children have to learn.	25	45	15	12	3	100 (1271)
at291	Young people are often rebellious, but they will have to adapt to society as they get older.	12	55	19	12	2	100 (1263)
at391	What we need most, more than laws and institutions, is a few courageous and devoted leaders in whom the people can trust.	27	45	16	10	2	100 (1251)
at491	People can be divided into two distinct classes: the weak and the strong.	14	34	22	24	7	101 (1261)
at591	Most of our social problems would be solved, if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked people.	15	40	22	18	5	100 (1246)
at691	Everybody would be better off, if people would talk less and	12	26	24	31	7	100

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[10] Labels as used in Codebooks 1991, 1995, and 1999 and in the SPSS file

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	ITEM	Answers (%)					
	work harder						(1264)
at791	Most people are disappointing, once you get to know them better.	7	21	28	38	6	100 (1265)
Label	**1995**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Total**
at195	Obedience and respect for authority are the two most important virtues children have to learn.	23	48	15	12	2	100 (1271)
at295	Young people are often rebellious, but they will have to adapt to society as they get older.	11	58	20	10	1	100 (1267)
at395	What we need most, more than laws and institutions, is a few courageous and devoted leaders in whom the people can trust.	22	46	19	11	2	100 (1258)
at495	People can be divided into two distinct classes: the weak and the strong.	10	35	22	28	5	100 (1264)
at595	Most of our social problems would be solved, if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked people.	11	40	25	20	4	100 (1244)
at695	Everybody would be better off, if people would talk less and work harder.	9	27	22	34	8	101 (1267)
at795	What we need is strong leaders who tell us what to do.	6	18	24	38	14	100 (1264)
Label	**1999**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Total**
at199	Obedience and respect for authority are the two most important virtues children have to learn.	24	50	12	12	2	100 (1264)
at299	The best people in society are those who challenge the established values.	5	40	37	17	1	100 (1212)
at399	The courts are right when they are easy on drug users. Punishment is not the right solution in these types of cases.	3	22	24	39	12	100 (1245)
at499	Most of our social problems would be solved if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked people.	8	37	26	24	5	100 (1248)
at599	What we need is strong leaders who will tell us what to do.	5	20	24	40	11	100 (1254)
at699	Everyone should be free to choose his own religious belief, lifestyle and sexual preference.	30	59	9	1	1	100 (1268)
at799	In every nation there exists a small vanguard of people who lead and a docile mass of people who follow.	3	35	31	24	6	99 (1220)

4.3 Analysis and Results

Table 4.1 shows that the sets of items were not the same in every year. In total 12 different items were used over the three waves. **Table 4.2** details this. It shows that items 1, "Obedience and respect for authority are the two most important virtues children have to learn", and 2, "Most of our social problems could be solved, if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked people" were used in all three waves (1991 ∩ 1995 ∩ 1999). Items 3-6 and item 9 were used only twice (in 1991 ∩ 1995 and in 1995 ∩ 1999, respectively); the remaining five items only once (in 1991 or 1999).

The use of sets of items some of whose elements differ over the waves complicates a longitudinal analysis. Particularly, the question of consistency over time arises: Is the same latent variable measured at each of the three time points?

One way to achieve consistency is to restrict the analysis to items 1 and 2 in **Table 4.2** (called the "core" items in the sequel). However, this has the drawback that information is thrown away which could diminish the reliability as well as the validity of the measurement of authoritarianism.

Table 4.2 Items selected in waves

NO	ITEMS	1991	1995	1999
1	Child has to learn obedience and respect for authority (at191, at195, at199)	X	X	X
2	Solution is to get rid of immoral people (at591, at595, at499)	X	X	X
3	Young people ought to get over rebellious phase (at291, at295)	X	X	
4	We need fewer laws but stronger leaders (at391, at395)	X	X	
5	Two sorts of people, strong and weak (at491, at495)	X	X	
6	Better if people talk less and work harder (at691, at695)	X	X	
7	Most people disappoint (at791)	X		
8	The best people are those who are challenging established values (at299)			X
9	Need for strong leaders (at795, at599)		X	X
10	Courts right in being easy on drug users (at399)			X
11	Own lifestyle, religious beliefs and sexual preferences (at699)			X
12	Strong national leaders and docile mass (at799)			X

As an alternative we propose extension of the set of core items as follows. First items that are taken twice (four items in 1991 and 1995, one item in 1995 and 1999) are added to the core and, secondly, items that were taken only once are added (one item taken in 1991 only and four items taken only in 1999) to the core, possibly extended on the basis of the preceding step.

We use the congeneric measures model presented by Jöreskog (1971, 1974), of which an example with 2 items in one measure and 4 items in a second measure is shown in **Figure 4.1**. We test whether the four items 3, 4, 5, and 6 in **Table 4.2**, that were taken in 1991 and 1995, are congeneric with the core items in 1991 and 1995. Congenericness between items means that their underlying latent variables have a correlation coefficient approximately equal to 1.00 and thus can be considered to measure the same underlying phenomenon.
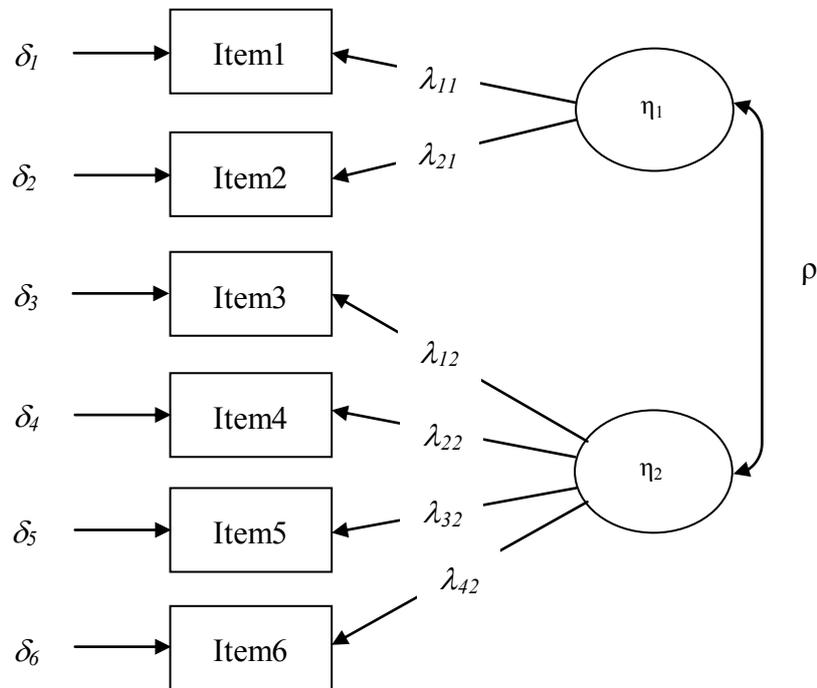
Figure 4.1 Congeneric measures model with 2 items in one measure and four items in a second measure

As a first step, the congenericness test will be performed with regard to the core items and items 3-6, the latter together as a group and for each of the four items individually. The test will be performed for 1991 and 1995. For identification reasons, in the individual analyses, the measurement error variances of the items will be fixed at the values obtained in the group analysis. Next item 9, that was also taken two times (but in 1995 and 1999), will be added to the items 3, 4, 5, and 6 for 1995. Again, the congenericness of the group of five items with the core items will be tested as well as the congenericness of item 9 individually with the core items. Next, item 7 will be added to the items 3, 4, 5, and 6 in 1991 and its groupwise and individual congenericness with the core items will be tested. Finally, the congenericness of items 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 will be tested groupwise and individually with the core items for 1999.

Table 4.3 Results of the congenericness tests: point estimates r and 95% interval estimates [rlow; rhigh] of the latent correlation coefficient ρ

YEAR	ITEM GROUPS	POINT ESTIMATE r ± 1.96 x se = [r_{low}; r_{high}]
1991	[1,2] x [3, 4, 5 ,6]	1.000 ± 1.96x 0.038 = [0.925;1.074]
	[1,2] x [3]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.057 = [0.888;1.112]
	[1,2] x [4]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.090 = [0.824;1.176]
	[1,2] x [5]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.081 = [0.841;1.159]
	[1,2] x [6]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.081 = [0.841;1.159]
1995	[1,2] x [3, 4, 5, 6]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.037 = [0.927;1.072]
	[1,2] x [3]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.058 = [0.886;1.114]
	[1,2] x [4]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.088 = [0.827;1.172]
	[1,2] x [5]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.057 = [0.888;1.112]
	[1,2] x [6]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.061 = [0.880;1.120]
1995	[1,2] x [3, 4, 5, 6, 9]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.036 = [0.929;1.071]
	[1,2] x [9]	0.965 ± 1.96 x 0.053 = [0.861;1.069]
1991	[1,2] x [3, 4, 5, 6, 7]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.036 = [0.929;1.071]
	[1,2] x [7]	1.000 ± 1.96 x 0.059 = [0.884;1.116]
1999	[1,2] x [8, 9, 10, 11, 12]	0.918 ± 1.96 x 0.053 = [0.814;1.022]
	[1,2] x [8]	0.841 ± 1.96 x 0.384 = [0.088;1.594]
	[1,2] x [9]	0.927 ± 1.96 x 0.048 = [0.833;1.021]
	[1,2] x [10]	0.998 ± 1.96 x 1.174 = [-1.303;3.299]
	[1,2] x [11]	0.993 ± 1.96 x10.175 = [-18.950;20.936]
	[1,2] x [12]	0.893 ± 1.96 x 0.091 = [0.715;1.071]

The results of the tests are presented in **Table 4.3**. All tests were performed by the LISREL program (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996, p. 131). The estimated latent correlation coefficient *r* was constrained as follows: $-1 \le r \le 1$. From **Table 4.3** it follows that a population latent correlation of ρ = 1 had to be rejected in none of the cases. However, for items 8, 10 and 11 the latent correlation coefficient is estimated very unreliably (item 8) to extremely unreliably (items 10 and 11). For items 10 and 11 not only a correlation of ρ = 1 but also a correlation of ρ = 0 could not be rejected. For item 10 extra doubt is raised by a nonsignificant negative loading (*t* = -0.854), for item 11 by an extremely low loading close to 0 (*t* = 0.098), and for item 8 by a loading that is only marginally significant (*t* = 2.302). In contrast, the 95% confidence intervals of all other extension items (items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12) never covered correlation values below 0.715.

4.4. Conclusion

We conclude that the congeneric measures model presented by Jöreskog (1971, 1974), performs well to test whether or not different items used in a longitudinal analysis can be used to measure the same underlying latent variable. Our main empirical finding is that for 1991 the seven items 1-7 in **Table 4.2** can be used to measure authoritarianism, for 1995 the seven items 1-6 and 9, and for 1999 only the four items 1, 2, 9 and 12.

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