

Book review

Greasley, P. 2008: *Quantitative data analysis using SPSS – an introduction for health and social science*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press. Illustrated. 144 pp, £16.99 paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0-335-22305-3. £60.00 hardback. ISBN: 978-0-335-22306-0.

This is an ideal introductory book for budding researchers who are embarking on the development and then analysis of data, and in this case, more specifically questionnaires using partly or exclusively closed questions amenable to statistical analysis.

The author has demonstrated his awareness of the specific needs of health and social care students who often study on a part-time basis towards a diploma, degree or higher academic qualification. He has also taken on board the apparent allergy to numbers often demonstrated by these professionals and has therefore refrained from using any number crunching examples that may put some potential readers off. However, the author has systematically made references for further reading so that any user is led to more advanced textbooks where appropriate.

After an initial chapter dealing with the different types of numerical variables, the author introduces the skills required for coding and entering data into an SPSS file. The use of screenshots will be extremely useful for SPSS beginners, particularly if they are also relatively new to statistical analysis. The language is simple and straightforward and this will no doubt help readers make sense of the concepts and not feel threatened by new language.

This book provides an introduction to quantitative data analysis and as such it deals with the descriptive analyses of one single variable initially, then with the interactions of two variables in the form of cross-tabulations and χ^2 for categorical data, and then correlations for interval data. The differences between two sets of scores are then examined and finally the reader is shown how to report results.

Throughout the text, boxes are used to propose examples that will help the understanding of the concepts and exercises are proposed to help readers check that they have indeed understood the various statistical concepts.

This is clearly an introductory text, and as such it is clear and extremely well presented. I would not hesitate to recommend it to anyone embarking upon an initial piece of research, but I would recommend that it should be used at the outset, ie, when designing a questionnaire, so that the designer can grasp some of the principles that are important if the design is to lead to good analysis. The book will also be useful at the writing up stage, be it for the purpose of assignment work or the submission of work for publication.

Finally, the experience that would be gained from this extremely useful and painless introduction to statistical analysis may encourage a number of readers to develop their knowledge of statistics further.

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