Let's Talk About Money! How Do Interviewer Expectations Affect Item Nonresponse to Income and Asset Questions?

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**What They Believe is What You Get:**

the Role of Interviewer Expectations in Respondents’ Nonresponse to Income and Asset Questions

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**Motivation**
- Income and asset questions in face-to-face surveys suffer from item nonresponse
- Missing information is considered as a major threat to rich, accurate, and reliable data
- Interviewers can affect respondents’ item nonresponse
- Expectations drive verbal and non-verbal behavior in any interaction (self-fulfilling prophecy)

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**
1. Do interviewers affect item nonresponse to financial questions in the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement (SHARE)?
   - Hypothesis: Interviewers affect financial item nonresponses
2. Do interviewer expectations about respondents providing an answer to income and asset questions matter?
   - Hypothesis: Positive interviewer expectations lead to fewer respondents’ item nonresponses to financial questions

**Data & Methods**
- **SHARE Wave 5:** Austria, Belgium, Germany, Spain, and Sweden
- Analysis sample: 359 interviewers with an average number of 28 interviews
- Approach:
  - Selection of three financial items (see Table 1), where an influence of interviewer expectations about income reporting (see Table 2) is expected
  - Multilevel logistic regressions

**Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Item</th>
<th>Reported (≥0)</th>
<th>Not reported (≤1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household income</td>
<td>16757</td>
<td>1003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank balance</td>
<td>9472</td>
<td>2046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest/dividend income</td>
<td>8966</td>
<td>2569</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: information collected in the regular SHARE interview

**Result I: Impact on Item Nonresponses**
- Overall, the portions of variance that are attributable to the interviewers are rather large

**Result II: What They Believe...**
- ... is what you get!

**Implications & Future Research**
- Modify interviewer training by e.g.,
  - Informing interviewers about effects to influence interviewers’ expectations
  - Providing more detailed information on data anonymity and confidentiality to increase interviewers’ expectations via changing interviewer attitudes
  - Pre-select interviewers based on their expectations for surveys with a specific focus on financial information
  - Test findings and recommendations in experimental settings to confirm results and implications