

SWAT 7: Impact of questionnaire design on response rates and satisfaction of the participants

Objective of this SWAT

To determine the effects of different questionnaire designs on response rates and satisfaction of the participants.

Study area: Follow-up.

Sample type: Participant.

Estimated funding level needed: Medium.

Background

A relevant aspect of designing questionnaires is the impact of their layout and appearance on completion rates.[1,2,3] Low response rates to surveys may cause bias in survey research.[4] Short surveys save on the costs of printing or copying, and may make it easier for participants to complete them.

Interventions and comparators

Intervention 1: Questionnaire is presented with a large font size and many spaces between the questions.

Intervention 2: Questionnaire is presented with a smaller font size, the questions are close together and the number of pages is reduced by 25-40%.

Index Type: Questionnaire Format

Method for allocating to intervention or comparator

Randomisation.

Outcome measures

Primary outcomes: Return of the questionnaire.

Secondary outcomes: Time to return of the questionnaire; completeness of the returned questionnaire; satisfaction of the participants and time taken to complete the questionnaire.

Analysis plans

Descriptive analysis will be done for the primary and the secondary outcomes. Bivariate analysis will be used to compare the randomised groups. Multivariate analysis will be done with the primary and the secondary outcomes as dependent variables and the length of the questionnaire and socio-demographic variables as covariates.

Possible problems in implementing this SWAT

The addition of the questions needed for the outcome analyses (participant satisfaction and time taken to complete the questionnaire) might influence the response rate.

References

1. Boynton PM, Greenhalgh T. Selecting, designing, and developing your questionnaire. *BMJ* 2004; 328: 1312-1315.
2. Douglas F, van Teijlingen E, Brindle S, Hundley V, Bruce J, Torrance N. Designing questionnaires for midwifery research. *RCM midwives: the official journal of the Royal College of Midwives* 2005; 8(5): 212-215.
3. Edwards PJ, Roberts I, Clarke MJ, DiGuseppi C, Wentz R, Kwan I, Cooper R, Felix LM, Pratap S. Methods to increase response to postal and electronic questionnaires. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2009; (3): MR000008.
4. Barclay S, Todd C, Finlay I, Grande G, Wyatt P. Not another questionnaire! Maximizing the response rate, predicting non-response and assessing non-response bias in postal questionnaire studies of GPs. *Family Practice* 2002; 19(1): 105-111.

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