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on Research Methodology  
for Business and  
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consecutive participation decision in comparison with the alternative of non-participation or postponed participation suggest a low degree of effectiveness by the Portuguese public intervention in the labour market. Moreover, the empirical application of a dynamic propensity score methodology seems to be a quite useful tool for the estimation of dynamic causal effects when the effectiveness of a sequence of participation decisions is tested compared to a distinct sequence of decisions.

**Keywords:** evaluation research, social programmes, active labour market policies, sequential treatments, propensity score matching

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## **Is There a Causal Relationship Between Construction Activity and the Portuguese Economy? An Econometric Empirical Application**

**Alcina Nunes, Jorge Lopes and Carlos Balsa**  
**Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal**

**Abstract:** It has long been recognised that the role of the construction industry in a country's national economy goes beyond its share in national output. Existing paradigms on the structural change of the construction industry as national economy develops over time have been evolving from an approach that stresses the role of construction investment (indeed physical capital) as an engine of economic growth to one where the pattern of the evolution of the industry should follow that of the general economy. Using time-series data drawn from the United Nations national accounts databases, this study applies an econometric methodology to assess the validity of the underlying propositions in Portugal. With the availability of long and reliable time-series data and the development of econometric methodology related to the study of economic relationships between variables a new set of studies has emerged. Indeed, making use of the most recent innovations in the literature of unit root tests, this paper uses the Granger causality methodology to investigate the relationship between construction activity, measured by the construction value added, and the Portuguese aggregate economy measured by its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The issues of concern here are whether the construction sector and the aggregate economy are interdependent and whether construction activity contributes to economic growth and/or economic growth contributes to the dynamics of the construction industry activity. This kind of economic research has not been applied, until now, in Portugal. However, the results could be of particular importance for policy makers and economic agents since they might affect not only all macroeconomic policy but also the management activities at a microeconomic level. The results have shown that there is, in the short and medium-run, a uni-directional relationship between GDP and construction output in Portugal. On the other hand, the results do not show any significant

effect of the construction growth on the GDP growth, at least in the short and medium run.

**Keywords:** Portugal, construction sector, GDP, unit root tests, Granger causality

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## **The Granularity of Scale Response Categories: The use of a 21-Point Scale**

**Noel Pearse**

**Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa**

**Abstract:** This research investigates the use of a 21-point Likert type scale in the design of a questionnaire that explores factors related to staff turnover and retention. The paper examines the notion of granularity in researcher-defined fixed rating scales, where granularity refers to the number of response categories or cut off points that are imposed on a scale (Smithson 2006). The aim of this research paper is to examine the usefulness of a scale with high granularity, from the perspectives of respondents and the researcher. The questionnaire was administered among employees in three different public sector organisations in South Africa, to create a combined data set of 178 respondents. Informing the formulation of the hypotheses was Parducci's (1965 cited in Tourangeau, Rips & Rasinski 2000) range-frequency model, which assumes that respondents make use of the various response categories available with equal frequency, if they are evenly spaced. It was therefore hypothesised that (1) there are no significant differences in the frequency of use of the 21 response categories, implying that all of the response categories are useful to respondents; (2) that there would be no difference in the response pattern of respondents when different scale types and lengths are used, implying that increasing the scale granularity did not lead to redundancy; and (3) that there are no significant differences in the variation of responses with ongoing use of the scale. That is, if the scale was useful to respondents, they would continue to use a wide range of the response options available. Chi-square tests were primarily used to test the hypotheses. It was concluded that the 21 point scale was useful to respondents and by implication to researchers as well. This was evident in the spread of responses across the 21 response categories of the scale, and that even with prolonged use, they continued to utilise a wide range of response options. It was recommended that researchers should give more explicit attention to scale granularity when designing a questionnaire and that further research is required to assess the value of various levels of scale granularity.

**Keywords:** questionnaire design; scale construction; likert scale; scale granularity

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