Dialectical Thinkers’ Divergence in Responding to Questions including Mixed Wordings and Frames

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ABSTRACT

The use of mixed wordings in phrasing scale items often produces method effects, such as divergence between responses to positively worded items (PWIs) and responses to negatively worded items (NWIs), resulting in a two-factor solution instead of a one-factor solution. The present study suggests that the method effect that occurs due to the use of mixed wordings of scale items is also present for responses to positively and negatively framed questions that employ an interrogative format. In addition, the present study suggests that the occurrence of the method effect caused by mixed wordings and mixed frames is influenced by the dialectical thinking tendency of respondents. Study one showed that responses to PWIs and responses to NWIs diverged from each other for respondents who had a stronger tendency toward dialectical thinking. For dialectical thinkers, PWIs and NWIs constituted separate factors, and the correlation of scores between PWIs and NWIs was relatively low. In study two, the respondents estimated future outcomes by responding to positively and negatively framed interrogative questions that included experts’ optimistic and pessimistic forecasts of future outcomes. The study showed that responses to the positively framed question including an optimistic forecast and responses to the negatively framed question including a pessimistic forecast diverged from each other when respondents had a stronger tendency toward dialectical thinking. The influence of dialectical thinking was evident, particularly when the respondent’s estimation was based on the past record showing an upward trend but not when it was based on the past record lacking a trend. The findings are discussed with respect to the literature of the method effect and the research of dialectical thinking.

Keywords: Method Effect, Response Divergence, PWI, NWI, Dialectical Thinking