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Evaluation of Inter-Sample Variability in Anomalous Ideation Scale IRT Parameter Estimates

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Abstract

Previous research has shown that belief in conspiracy theories and paranormal phenomena is related to attitudes about controversial scientific topics (e.g., climate change, vaccines, and genetically modified food) as well as levels of general (mis)trust in science. However, there has been relatively little literature comprehensively evaluating the reliability of the measurement tools used to assess paranormal and conspiracist beliefs. It is important to ensure the psychometric properties of these measures so that future research can use the scales with appropriate confidence. In this study, we adopt an Item Response Theory (IRT) framework to assess item and scale functioning and compare parameter estimates across three large, independent general population samples. Several methods are used to assess the variability in scale functioning across samples. We discuss the implications of these results for the measurement of conspiracist and paranormal belief as well as for expectations about the stability of psychometric results in general.