BOOK REVIEW


Wong, Eugene KO

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, United Kingdom

This is a book, which is as useful to psychiatrists as it is to psychologists, and just as important – a solid grasp on the fundamental concepts of statistics is vital to making sense of published work and consequent informed clinical changes.

Dancey and Reidy employ their understanding of psychology exceptionally well as they turn statistics – an intimidating subject for most of us – into something that is accessible and even enjoyable to learn. This is what makes this book stand out from others: it keeps its readers engaged for over 600 pages. Not many have done this so successfully, especially when tackling a subject full of ‘3-day monks (mikka bouzu)’, and even then, those are the people who have mustered up enough courage to tackle statistics!

The authors make it clear in the preface that Statistics without Maths is neither a ‘statistical cookbook’ (‘how to’s without explanations) nor a ‘traditional style textbook’ (concepts explained in a ‘dry’ manner), but somewhere comfortably in-between. They employ a variety of means to engage the reader – a playful yet intelligent writing-style, liberal use of colour diagrams, examples of how certain statistical tests appear in literature and how to interpret them, questions scattered among statistical concepts, and formal Multiple Choice Questionnaires (MCQs) at the end, which can be completed online and results emailed to yourself should you want to keep a record of your learning. In practical terms, it is tied in closely with the IBM SPSS Statistics package, and offers step-by-step annotated screenshots on how to input and analyse data, and how to perform certain statistical tests.

The book is organized into 16 chapters, starting with basic concepts such as levels of measurement and research design, making use of scenarios such as ‘statistics anxiety and procrastination’, which is an great way of engaging the reader. It then answers questions that many of us have been afraid to ask: for example, why is p set to <0.05 (and how this is not always the best way to judge the importance of a result), or what is the logic behind using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) instead of an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) or t-test for pretest-posttest designs? The second half of the book removes any preconceived ideas of incomprehensibility associated with scary-sounding yet fundamental statistical concepts such as ANOVAs, ANCOVAs, Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVAs), multiple-regression and factor analysis.

Statistics without Maths is easy and surprisingly fun to read, and has a built-in motivator which helps its readers stick with it to the end.
Corresponding Author
Eugene Kee Onn Wong
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, United Kingdom

Email: eugene.wongs@gmail.com