

Example 3: Classical Test Theory Reliability and Items Analysis in STATA and SAS

The data from this example come from Study 2 of this publication:

Summers, J. A., Hoffman, L., Marquis, J., Turnbull, A. P., Poston, D. P., & Nelson, L. G. L. (2005). [Measuring the quality of family-professional partnerships in special education services](#). *Exceptional Children*, 72(1), 65-81.

We are measuring the importance of various aspects of parent–professional partnerships for families who have children with disabilities. We begin with two subscales that were identified and refined through exploratory factor analysis in a previous study: Child (11 items) and Family (10 items). Each scale has responses ranging from 1 to 5. For illustration, we will examine the child scale items using STATA and the family scale items using SAS, but you can use any software package that provides this information (e.g., *alpha* in R). Note that I am deliberately using all available cases (which is an option within STATA and SAS) to preserve the most information possible.

STATA Code and Output for 11-Item Child Subscale ([STATA documentation for alpha here](#))

```
display "11-item Child Subscale"
display "Descriptives and Correlations using All Available Cases"
summarize pi5 pi6 pi7 pi8 pi9 pi10 pi11 pi12 pi13 pi14 pi15
pwcorr pi5 pi6 pi7 pi8 pi9 pi10 pi11 pi12 pi13 pi14 pi15
```

Item Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
PI5	187	4.40107	.8765763	1	5
PI6	187	4.705882	.6591928	1	5
PI7	186	4.731183	.626268	1	5
PI8	177	4.429379	.9150485	1	5
PI9	185	4.4	.8609903	1	5
PI10	188	4.340426	.821544	1	5
PI11	187	4.743316	.6462428	1	5
PI12	186	4.55914	.7419822	1	5
PI13	187	4.609626	.7052136	1	5
PI14	184	4.565217	.7437073	2	5
PI15	184	4.847826	.521343	1	5

What do these result indicate about item difficulty (severity here)?

Correlations (after using Conditional Formatting + Custom Number Format in Excel)

Child	pi5	pi6	pi7	pi8	pi9	pi10	pi11	pi12	pi13	pi14	pi15
pi5	1.00	.50	.36	.48	.34	.43	.46	.47	.43	.41	.44
pi6	.50	1.00	.57	.55	.39	.37	.46	.52	.49	.37	.62
pi7	.36	.57	1.00	.47	.43	.47	.59	.57	.41	.38	.65
pi8	.48	.55	.47	1.00	.51	.52	.49	.57	.40	.31	.46
pi9	.34	.39	.43	.51	1.00	.54	.55	.70	.62	.42	.46
pi10	.43	.37	.47	.52	.54	1.00	.54	.60	.50	.54	.48
pi11	.46	.46	.59	.49	.55	.54	1.00	.62	.57	.42	.54
pi12	.47	.52	.57	.57	.70	.60	.62	1.00	.72	.51	.61
pi13	.43	.49	.41	.40	.62	.50	.57	.72	1.00	.51	.62
pi14	.41	.37	.38	.31	.42	.54	.42	.51	.51	1.00	.52
pi15	.44	.62	.65	.46	.46	.48	.54	.61	.62	.52	1.00

Item Discrimination and Reliability Statistics

```
display "Item Discriminations and Alpha Reliability (All Available Cases)"
alpha pi5 pi6 pi7 pi8 pi9 pi10 pi11 pi12 pi13 pi14 pi15, item // can add std
```

Item	Obs	Sign	item-test correlation	item-rest correlation	average interitem covariance	alpha
PI5	187	+	0.6674	0.5706	.2661626	0.9080
PI6	187	+	0.7054	0.6417	.2753045	0.9035
PI7	186	+	0.7067	0.6468	.2767228	0.9031
PI8	177	+	0.7281	0.6391	.2584227	0.9048
PI9	185	+	0.7451	0.6689	.2583196	0.9021
PI10	188	+	0.7517	0.6808	.2598782	0.9011
PI11	187	+	0.7583	0.7047	.2707859	0.9001
PI12	186	+	0.8512	0.8101	.2553623	0.8941
PI13	187	+	0.7631	0.7046	.2662449	0.8997
PI14	184	+	0.6618	0.5818	.2735985	0.9060
PI15	184	+	0.7588	0.7168	.2800356	0.9017
Test scale					.2673433	0.9103 → overall alpha

The alpha column gives what alpha would be if that item were removed → "alpha if deleted"

Large values indicate bad items (i.e., alpha would improve without it)

Label

- pi5 Help you gain skills or information to get what your child needs.
- pi6 Have the skills to help your child succeed.
- pi7 Provide services that meet the individual needs of your child.
- pi8 Speak up for your child's best interests when working with other service providers.
- pi9 Let you know about the good things your child does.
- pi10 Are available when you need them.**
- pi11 Treat your child with dignity.
- pi12 Build on your child's strengths.
- pi13 Value your opinion about your child's needs.
- pi14 Are honest, even when they have bad news.**
- pi15 Keep your child safe when your child is in their care.

Item Discrimination and Reliability Statistics after Revision

```
display "9-item Child Subscale -- Drop Item 10 and 14"
display "Item Discriminations and Alpha Reliability"
alpha pi5 pi6 pi7 pi8 pi9 pi11 pi12 pi13 pi15, label item
```

Item	Obs	Sign	item-test correlation	item-rest correlation	average interitem covariance	alpha
pi5	187	+	0.6749	0.5548	.267477	0.8960
pi6	187	+	0.7380	0.6652	.2749664	0.8859
pi7	186	+	0.7196	0.6473	.2788524	0.8869
pi8	177	+	0.7467	0.6401	.2557001	0.8896
pi9	185	+	0.7503	0.6555	.2575651	0.8872
pi11	187	+	0.7656	0.6999	.2717514	0.8828
pi12	186	+	0.8539	0.8031	.2526514	0.8742
pi13	187	+	0.7645	0.6911	.2668239	0.8828
pi15	184	+	0.7633	0.7118	.2836274	0.8851
Test scale					.2676971	0.8970 → overall alpha

The remaining 9 items seem to be ok—there are no obvious problems with item discrimination, and the items all measure some aspect of child support. Let’s see what happens with the other subscale, to which the deleted items 10 and 14 will be added...

SAS Code and Output for 12-Item Family Subscale ([SAS documentation about alpha here](#)):

```
TITLE "12-item Family Subscale";
PROC CORR DATA=work.partner ALPHA OUT=work.corrs; * Save correlations to dataset;
VAR pi10 pi14 pi16 pi17 pi18 pi19 pi20 pi21 pi22 pi23 pi24 pi25;
RUN;
```

Item Descriptive Statistics

Simple Statistics							
Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Label
PI10	188	4.34043	0.82154	816.00000	1.00000	5.00000	pi10 Are available when you need them.
PI14	184	4.56522	0.74371	840.00000	2.00000	5.00000	pi14 Are honest, even when they have bad news.
PI16	185	4.09730	1.00068	758.00000	1.00000	5.00000	pi16 Use words that you understand.
PI17	184	4.19565	0.89001	772.00000	1.00000	5.00000	pi17 Plan meetings at times and places that are good for you and your family.
PI18	184	4.39674	0.81662	809.00000	1.00000	5.00000	pi18 Return your messages.
PI19	185	4.36216	0.76163	807.00000	3.00000	5.00000	pi19 Keep appointments with your child and family.
PI20	184	4.42391	0.83285	814.00000	1.00000	5.00000	pi20 Protect your family's privacy.
PI21	183	4.44262	0.78147	813.00000	1.00000	5.00000	pi21 Show respect for your family's values and beliefs.
PI22	183	4.39891	0.77700	805.00000	1.00000	5.00000	pi22 Listen without judging your child or family.
PI23	184	4.53261	0.71596	834.00000	1.00000	5.00000	pi23 Are dependable.
PI24	184	4.54891	0.71502	837.00000	1.00000	5.00000	pi24 Pay attention to what you have to say.
PI25	184	4.24457	0.87464	781.00000	1.00000	5.00000	pi25 Are friendly.

Correlations (after using Conditional Formatting + Custom Number Format in Excel)

Family	PI10	PI14	PI16	PI17	PI18	PI19	PI20	PI21	PI22	PI23	PI24	PI25
PI10	1.00	.54	.49	.62	.58	.57	.31	.57	.51	.53	.49	.48
PI14	.54	1.00	.31	.42	.46	.40	.17	.44	.35	.48	.50	.39
PI16	.49	.31	1.00	.62	.45	.67	.46	.49	.48	.46	.47	.46
PI17	.62	.42	.62	1.00	.65	.63	.42	.64	.51	.52	.57	.57
PI18	.58	.46	.45	.65	1.00	.69	.36	.57	.55	.52	.58	.51
PI19	.57	.40	.67	.63	.69	1.00	.47	.58	.52	.46	.48	.54
PI20	.31	.17	.46	.42	.36	.47	1.00	.47	.43	.36	.23	.33
PI21	.57	.44	.49	.64	.57	.58	.47	1.00	.65	.54	.58	.56
PI22	.51	.35	.48	.51	.55	.52	.43	.65	1.00	.52	.57	.39
PI23	.53	.48	.46	.52	.52	.46	.36	.54	.52	1.00	.68	.46
PI24	.49	.50	.47	.57	.58	.48	.23	.58	.57	.68	1.00	.43
PI25	.48	.39	.46	.57	.51	.54	.33	.56	.39	.46	.43	1.00

Item Discrimination and Reliability Statistics

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Variables	Alpha
Raw	0.919916
Standardized	0.921630

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha with Deleted Variable					
Deleted Variable	Raw Variables		Standardized Variables		Label
	Correlation with Total	Alpha	Correlation with Total	Alpha	
PI10	0.711158	0.911409	0.705486	0.913735	pi10 Are available when you need them.
PI14	0.546106	0.918109	0.543628	0.920493	pi14 Are honest, even when they have bad news.
PI16	0.662472	0.914501	0.660495	0.915638	pi16 Use words that you understand.
PI17	0.772565	0.908476	0.769371	0.911001	pi17 Plan meetings at times and places that are good for you and your family.
PI18	0.731046	0.910555	0.734015	0.912519	pi18 Return your messages.
PI19	0.757937	0.909720	0.750262	0.911823	pi19 Keep appointments with your child and family.
PI20	0.470009	0.921769	0.484819	0.922889	pi20 Protect your family's privacy.
PI21	0.756793	0.909628	0.760158	0.911397	pi21 Show respect for your family's values and beliefs.
PI22	0.672468	0.913134	0.675767	0.914994	pi22 Listen without judging your child or family.
PI23	0.678667	0.913123	0.682219	0.914721	pi23 Are dependable.
PI24	0.685460	0.912873	0.690390	0.914375	pi24 Pay attention to what you have to say.
PI25	0.630974	0.915071	0.629229	0.916949	pi25 Are friendly.

Item Discrimination and Reliability Statistics after Revision

```
TITLE1 "11-item Family Subscale - drop 17, 18, and 19";
PROC CORR DATA=work.partner ALPHA;
VAR pi10 pi14 pi16 pi20 pi21 pi22 pi23 pi24 pi25; RUN;
```

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha	
Variables	Alpha
Raw	0.880650
Standardized	0.884636

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha with Deleted Variable					
Deleted Variable	Raw Variables		Standardized Variables		Label
	Correlation with Total	Alpha	Correlation with Total	Alpha	
PI10	0.685695	0.862388	0.680122	0.868106	pi10 Are available when you need them.
PI14	0.539910	0.874580	0.539446	0.879847	pi14 Are honest, even when they have bad news.
PI16	0.622190	0.870000	0.619892	0.873193	pi16 Use words that you understand.
PI20	0.452268	0.882623	0.461485	0.886146	pi20 Protect your family's privacy.
PI21	0.751601	0.857085	0.754751	0.861677	pi21 Show respect for your family's values and beliefs.
PI22	0.670314	0.864026	0.673817	0.868642	pi22 Listen without judging your child or family.
PI23	0.693632	0.862935	0.698980	0.866494	pi23 Are dependable.
PI24	0.675898	0.864313	0.683611	0.867808	pi24 Pay attention to what you have to say.
PI25	0.601005	0.870156	0.599113	0.874927	pi25 Are friendly.

The remaining 9 items seem to be ok—although they vary in discrimination, those with lower item-remainder correlations were thought to measure different aspects of the construct that would limit construct validity if removed... so we called it done! The article has been cited 228 times...