

Book Review

Title of the Book : SPSS Explained

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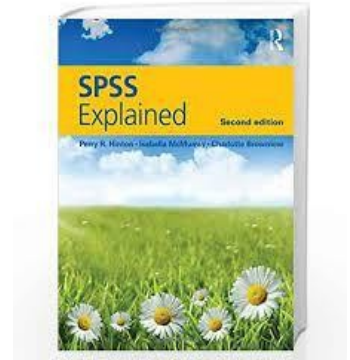
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Statistical analysis has always been a matter of confusion, argument and fear for many of us, involved in social science research. Thanks to the software like SPSS, we take fee-free breaths. SPSS is the most popular statistical software available in the market. So, obviously, many authors take the pride in writing tutorial books , handbooks, manuals, instruction guides, step-by-step procedures and other nuances of using SPSS and understanding its output in a more meaningful way.

This book, one such in the series, entitled as ‘SPSS Explained’ is authored by three prominent authors namely Perry R. Hinton, Isabella McMurray & Charlotte Brownlow. Published by the Routledge of New York, this is a multi-colour edition spanning for 387 pages in toto. The book has 17 chapters, a glossary, an index and an one page table ‘Choosing a statistical test’.

Chapter 1 gives an outline of the book and the outline being set for each chapter. Chapter 2 shows how to enter data in SPSS, how to recode your data, how to replace missing values, how to split your file for analysis, how to assign weights to cases and how to import data from Excel. Chapter 3 explains how to conduct descriptive statistical tests in SPSS. Frequency command, descriptive command, explore command, crosstabs command and custom tables command are explored. Chapter 4 demonstrates how to create histograms, boxplots, bar charts, clustered and stacked bar charts, error bar charts, line graphs, pie charts and how to generate and edit graphs with both chart builder and legacy dialogs options. Chapter 5 gives an introduction to statistical testing. This chapter dwells upon topics such as intro to parametric tests, the logic of significance testing, confidence intervals, test of normality, violations of assumptions and bootstrapping.

Chapters 6 to 16 shows clearly how to run various statistical tests in SPSS. A step by step method is adopted to explain how to conduct each test, along with screenshots of SPSS software - t Tests in Chapter 6; General linear model in Chapter 7; One factor analysis of variance in Chapter 8; Two factor analysis of variance in Chapter 9; Multivariate analysis of variance in Chapter 10; Non-parametric two sample tests in Chapter 11; Non-parametric k sample tests in Chapter 12; Chi-Square test in Chapter 13; Linear correlation and regression in Chapter 14; Multiple regression and multiple correlation in chapter 15 and Factor analysis in Chapter 16. Chapter 17 explains how to check the reliability of your questionnaire in SPSS.

The ‘8 Page glossary’ lists all the important terms in the alphabetical order and explains the terms in a very simple language which keeps learners and readers at easy. A ‘3 page alphabetical index’ helps the readers to locate the page numbers of the required tests, as

found in the chapters. A ‘one page table’ entitled ‘Choosing a statistical test’, is a boon for the readers who want to decide what statistical test is to be selected for what kind of data. This page also leads the readers to the concerned chapter Number.

When I was going through chapters 6 to 16, I found that : Each statistical test chapter is beautifully and logically designed to ensure that the readers understand it easily. The authors introduce the test listing the conditions and assumptions required for it. A scenario is given as a case study. Then, with the help of colourful SPSS screenshots, the authors demonstrate how to enter data, how to conduct the test step by step (explaining what radio buttons or options are to be chosen in various stages in the respective screenshots) and they present the output as given by SPSS. The explanation for the SPSS output tables is given under two headings: SPSS essential and SPSS advanced. Apart from a detailed explanation of both the essential and advanced metrics found in the table, using the circular callouts, the authors have given indications for various measures like Test statistics, p-value, independent variable, dependent variable etc. Dozens of FAQs are presented at the end of each chapter. Along with them, we could see a lot of colourful left or right side boxes which give explanation, points to remember etc., about the statistical test being carried out.

In my opinion, the book is lucidly written keeping in mind the knowledge level of beginners. The language is quite simple and easy to access. The authors have logically demonstrated each and every statistical test with a lot of screenshots, procedures, callouts and explanations. The interpretation of the SPSS output given for both the basic and advanced level learner is praiseworthy. This book is really a boon for the researchers, academicians and the students who want to understand statistics in general and who want to learn SPSS in particular. After reading and using the book since a year, I found this book is highly informative and handy whenever I need to learn/refresh myself about any of the basic statistical tests. I wish the authors would come out with another book explaining, in the same style, about advanced statistical tests like cluster analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, mediation and moderation analysis, discriminant analysis, path analysis, conjoint analysis etc.

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