Advanced Topics and Further Reading

Longitudinal Structural Equation Models-General


Latent Growth Curve Models


Latent Variable Interactions

There are two general approaches to testing moderator (i.e., interaction) hypotheses in SEM. The most common and simplest approach is by using multigroup SEM. In this approach, the moderator must be a categorical variable that moderates the relationships tested in the model. In regression analysis, moderation is tested by computing a product variable where the two predictors hypothesized to interact are multiplied together. The two predictors and the product variable are used to predict the dependent variable.

If the two interacting predictors are measured variables, the exact same procedure as that used in regression can be used to test for moderation. An analogous procedure also can be used for latent variables, but the process is more complex and there are several suggested approaches. The complexity stems from the fact that there are multiple indicators for each predictor and multiplying them together creates a product latent variable with $j \times k$ indicators ($j$ is the number of indicators for the first latent variable and $k$ is the number of indicators for the second latent variable). Mplus (Version 3 and above) will automatically handle latent variable interactions using a modified version of the Klein and Moosbrugger latent moderated structural equations (2000; LMS) approach.

Further Reading


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Marsh, H.W, Wen, Z., Hau, K-T., Little, T.D, Bovaird, J,A, & Widaman, K.F. (2007). Unconstrained structural equation models of latent measurement hypotheses, and the ability to estimate correlated errors and test various features that facilitate analysis of multilevel models with two levels (see Heck & Thomas, 2015). Advantages of this approach over HLM include the use of latent variables, the ability to test multilevel measurement hypotheses, and the ability to estimate correlated errors and test various measurement error assumptions.

Further Reading


Latent Class Analysis and Growth Mixture Models

Latent class analysis tests categorical latent variables. Used when the latent variables are assumed to be categorical (2 or more classes). Akin to a latent variable approach to discriminant analysis in which individuals are classified according to probability of membership in classes. Mplus, Lisrel, EQS, and Amos all have features for latent class analysis and “mixture modeling,”
the term used to refer to combining continuous and categorical latent variables in a single model. Use of latent classes to categorize trajectories from growth models is referred to as "growth mixture models".

Further Reading

Causal Indicators
One can specify “latent” variables so that the indicators predict the latent variable (arrows go in the opposite direction from usual). Such indicators are sometimes called “causal indicators” or “formative indicators”. The resulting aggregate variables are not really latent variables, because they do not estimate measurement error. They are more related to linear composites such as that found in principal components analysis. The Edwards and Bagozzi article provides an excellent overview and link to the literature.

Further Reading

Multitrait-Multimethod Matrix (MTMM) Models
MTMM models use structural equation modeling to expand upon an approach to testing construct validity by Campbell & Fiske (1959). The object is to separate out variation in the latent variables that is due to method variance. Method variance is variance that is due to the method of measurement rather than the substantive content of the measure. For instance, latent variables based on self-reported volunteerism items reflect true volunteerism and self-report method bias. Using multiple methods to measure a construct (e.g., observation, self-report, archival data) and multiple indicators for each method, one can separate out method and “trait” (the substantive construct being measured) variance. These models often run into problems with empirical underidentification unless there are at least three traits measured and three methods of measurement (see Eid, 2000, a practical approach that seems to work well).

Further Reading
Latent State-Trait Models

Another longitudinal data approach involves an attempt to use SEM to partition variance that remains stable over time and variance that fluctuates from wave to wave. For instance, some cities have a chronically low or high crime rate over time, but there are yearly fluctuations that may depend on migration or economic factors. The latent trait-state models attempt to separate out the stable aspect of a variable from the fluctuating aspect, and each can be used as a predictor or a predicted variable in a larger model. There are several major approaches that have been proposed (see Newsom, 2015, for a summary).

Further Reading


Power Issues and Power Analysis in SEM

There are several important issues regarding statistical power in SEM. One of the primary concerns is how to conduct power analyses to determine sample size and effect sizes in SEM. Greg Hancock’s chapter is a nice recent overview of the topic. Online calculators and macros for SAS and R are available (see http://timo.gnambs.at/en/scripts/powerforsem and http://www.datavis.ca/sasmacro/csmpower.html and http://quantpsy.org/rmsea/rmsea.htm).

Further Reading


Assumptions and Diagnostics
In addition to assumptions of multivariate normality, there are several other assumptions in SEM that follow the assumptions from regression analysis, including constant distribution of residuals, linearity, and outliers. In addition, we have not discussed multicollinearity issues in much detail. Although these assumptions can be tested, few researchers do enough to screen their data and evaluate various assumptions about the data. One barrier is the fact that most SEM packages do not have features that make testing various assumptions easy.

Sample Weighting and Complex Sampling Designs
Large, population-based studies that use stratified random sampling or cluster sampling can be adjusted for sampling selection biases. Such adjustments provide better estimates of the population parameters and standard errors than the assumption of random sampling used in traditional SEM (i.e., an assumption of all traditional statistical testing). Presently, only Mplus provides capabilities for making such adjustments automatically.

Keeping Abreast of Developments
(There are several journals that often feature articles on developments in SEM.)

Structural Equation Modeling: An Interdisciplinary Journal (published by Lawrence Erlbaum)
Psychological Methods (published by the American Psychological Association)
Psychometrika (published by the Psychometric Society)
Sociological Methods and Research (published by Sage)
Sociological Methodology (an annual volume published by Blackwell)
Multivariate Behavioral Research (published by Society of Multivariate Experimental Psychology)
Organizational Research Methods (Sage)