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STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGY TO FILL IN INFORMATION GAPS ON DAILY LIFE OF CHILDREN AND TEENS DURING HEALTH CRISIS

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Statistical production during the pandemic: continuity and adaptation

Pandemic had an impact also on the way of conducting surveys

NSIs needed to find new strategies to overcome the difficulties of conducting face-to-face interviews due to measures to protect the health of respondents and interviewers

- Change of interview technique, preference for web and telephone interviews
- Adapting survey designs towards more sustainable survey processes
- Rescheduling surveys (es postponing 2020 Censuses) which make high use of face-to-face interviews (hard to be done) and made by network of municipality interviewers (mostly obliged to work from home)



Middle and High school Students survey (M&HS)

The context

Originally, the survey on **Middle and High school Students (M&HS)** was planned to be carried out in 2021 (spring) by re-using the same survey design adopted for a previous survey on “*Integration of second generation of migrants*” (conducted in 2015) on a sample of schools (middle and high schools) and students aged 10-18 years

Istat was committed by the Ministry of Education to investigate the effects of the pandemic on the school teaching and education of children and teens, their behaviors and social relationships, how their daily life changed due to “imposed” teaching conditions during lock-down and how the school faced the distance- teaching



The survey, included in the National Statistical Programme, was **in the spotlight of the Italian Authority for Protection of personal data** that required a “voluntary” survey participation for students (no obligation) and a DPIA (Data Protection Impact Assessment) to assess risk in data protection (Art 35 UE regulation 2016/679 GDPR)

- The presence of minor students (under 14) in the sample recommended particular caution and strict authentication and security protocols in processing data
- DPIA produced by Istat was submitted to the Authority for the protection of personal data and approved in the autumn 2020

Original survey design

M&HS survey has **2 surveys in one**: 2 sample units (school principals and students); 2 sample lists; 2 questionnaires; 2 techniques, etc.

A. Survey on Principals

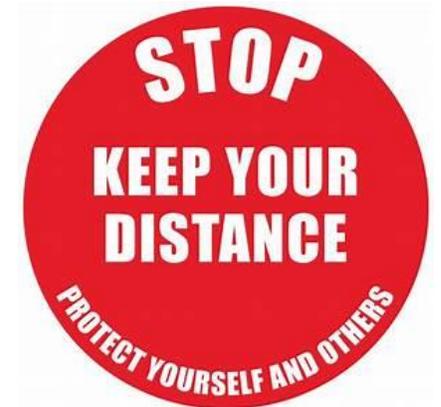
- **face-to-face** interviews
- **interviewers** recruited from municipality offices
- **fieldwork at school**, during work time
- logistic agreement with the school

B. Survey on students:

- **web questionnaire** to be filled in the **school pc laboratory**, in the presence of a teacher and an **interviewer in the role of trainer&supervisor**
- **interviewers** recruited from municipality offices
- **fieldwork at school**, during teaching activity
- logistic agreement with the school, delivery link to access questionnaire (username and password) directly to students in a sealed envelope
- for students under 18, parents can refuse the participation to the survey by informing the school on that
- **School secretariats collected non-consent** of parents

Pandemic led to change the original survey design due to lockdown and school closures

- it was not possible to meet principals and students at school
- students took lessons at home (distance learning) and were not able to fill in the questionnaire during lessons time, consequently supervision of interviewer and teacher was missing
- Municipalities strongly reduced interviewers activity due to lockdown and flexible working measures were introduced for workers



A new strategy and a new survey design



The challenge was to adapt survey design and finding new data collection strategies to overcome logistics difficulties in a very quick time (no possibility to postpone the fieldwork) without losing in quality

- ✓ To keep methodology unchanged with respect to objectives, time reference, target population and domains of estimation
- ✓ Oversampling of students was necessary, in the perspective of a different expected participation rate as consequence of a fieldwork not supported by interviewers combined with voluntary participation
- ✓ Redesign the interactive model and methods for data collection in order to be:
 - Sustainable for schools and families;
 - Compliant to the impact assessment “scheme” on the protection of personal data approved by the Authority for data protection;
 - Supported by the Ministry of Education, partner of the project, for the collaboration of schools in supporting the data collection (f.i. by informing students and encouraging them to participate)

A more digitalized and modern survey

- ✓ Principals used a **web questionnaire** (vs face-to-face interview)
- ✓ A **Web and Device responsive Questionnaire** was implemented for students to be filled at home, during free-time by **using also smartphone** and not only tablet/pc
- ✓ Username and password + **QR code to access web questionnaire delivered** to students in the advance letter addressed to:
 - student, in case she/he is over 18
 - student's family, in case the student is under 18
- ✓ **Advance letters translated into 10 foreign languages** to be more inclusive towards the foreign students' parents who have difficulties in understanding the Italian language
- ✓ an **help desk service for respondents** (by email and telephone) and a dashboards for monitoring activities were set up
- ✓ Sending reminders: by post to students (through families, if minors); by email to school principals

Both surveys were set up in 2 months, the kick off was in spring 2021 as scheduled!



Two steps of fieldwork: the recovery in the autumn

Phase 1

Fieldwork in May (2 weeks, school open), **June** (school closure), **July** (summer school holiday) → lower response rate than expected, especially among foreign students

adpating
survey
design in
progress

Additional features were implemented to centralized system used for sending massive email in order to allow massive transmission of customized attachments for single recipient, **so that each school could be provided of its own list of students who had not joined the survey in phase 1**

Ministry of Education issued a circular to the regional school offices underlining the importance of school collaboration by:

- encouraging students (both Italian and foreign) to take part to the survey;
- taking care of direct the requests of students and families to the Contact center service in charge of supporting respondents

Phase 2

Fieldwork resumed in October (1 month) when school recover the teaching “in person” , but pandemic circumstamces were yet tricky for schools and families

Total response rate of 41% for students, in line with expectations and higher than the rate recorded in other CAWI surveys on individuals; 63% participation of school principals

Less participation among foreign students than Italians (33% foreigners vs 45% Italians)

Less participation among students of the southern regions

Final conclusion and lessons learnt

- ✓ Technical solutions adopted for M&HS represented a further step towards the modernization and digitalization of data collection processes
- ✓ the tools used for data collection (device responsive questionnaire) and recruitment of respondents (QR code) showed effectiveness, encouraging the re-use in other contexts as well
- ✓ data collection model adopted for M&HS and approved by DPIA can be generalized to surveys on young people, not just students
- ✓ Designing a survey on young people requires specific caution; methodological, organizational and regulatory measures different from those normally adopted in designing surveys on the rest of the population are required
- ✓ Collaboration and teamwork were essential elements for the success of the survey which was redefined in a very quick time and involved many actors, both inside and outside Istat

Thanks

for your attention

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