

**ANALYSIS OF NOMINAL DATA
– MULTI-WAY CONTINGENCY TABLE**

Agnieszka Stanimir

Abstract. Presented in this paper the method of graphical presentation of the relationship between nominal variables and their categories gives the opportunity for an extensive diagnosis of dependence variables. Correspondence analysis and mosaic plots are based on the same grounds, i.e. contingency table or multi-way contingency table. Correspondence analysis can be used in the study of relationships between two or more nominal variables without limiting the number of categories. In the case of many variables, the multi-dimensional contingency table is used very often. Only the difficulty of construction of such a table and the combined variables can affect the decision of a researcher about the validity of using this solution. For mosaic plots the situation is different. These graphs represent very well the relationships between two categories of nominal variables with few categories. The introduction of another variable to the study, which is described by two or three categories, is also not too problematic, and the graph is easy to interpret. However, if in a multi-way contingency table variables are a combination of several primary variables, described with many categories, the mosaic plot is no longer as clear as the projection made in correspondence analysis.

Keywords: nominal data, multi-way contingency table, mosaic display, correspondence analysis.

JEL Classification: C38, J21.

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is the presentation and popularization of mosaic displays. These charts are a method of analysis and graphical presentation of nominal variables. Mosaic displays therefore are an alternative to correspondence analysis. The basic approaches of both indicated methods are based on frequencies of two nominal variables from the contingency table. In each cell of this table one can observe the frequency of two categories from two different variables. There is no restriction on the maximum num-

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ber of categories of variables. In the literature, there is only a limitation on the number of cells, up to 5, given by Yule, Kendall (1966, p. 471); Blalock (1975, p. 250). Mosaic graphs do not require the use of reduction of dimensionality methods, such as correspondence analysis.⁹ This paper shows the way of conducting both methods for many variables. If the analyzed variables are more than two, the plotting in a mosaic way is possible after saving the variables in a multidimensional contingency table. Correspondence analysis gives many more opportunities, for example, it is possible to analyse data from the Burt matrix or the concatenated contingency table. However, to compare the results of both methods, correspondence analysis was also conducted for multidimensional contingency table.

To illustrate the procedure in both methods, we used the data from the statistical yearbook of Labour Force Survey. II quarter 2011 (*Aktywność ekonomiczna...*). The variables, their categories and the number of occurrences are discussed in Section 5.

2. Multiway contingency table

To present the construction of a multidimensional contingency table, it is necessary to introduce the basic terms of contingency tables for the two variables.

Let us assume that the number of categories in variable A is r and in variable B – c , then the n_{ij} is the observed frequency¹⁰ of category i of variable A ($i = 1, \dots, r$) and of category j of variable B ($j = 1, \dots, c$). For Pearson χ^2 test of independence should be determined successively: row sums (row frequencies) $in_{i\bullet} = \sum_{j=1}^c n_{ij}$; column sums (row frequencies)

$jn_{\bullet j} = \sum_{i=1}^r n_{ij}$. Row and column sums gives information about the total count

of categories of both variables. Next there are observed proportion $p_{ij} = \frac{n_{ij}}{n}$, which is the percentage share of occurrence in the study of category i of

⁹ The way to create a mosaic charts for data from contingency table is described in detail in my work: “Visualization of nominal variables – correspondence analysis and graphs mosaic” (2011, in press).

¹⁰ The terminology used to describe the components of the contingency table is different among authors, but that used in this work was taken from Goodman (1963); Greenacre (1993); Jobson (1992).

variable A and of category j of variable B . These values are elements of the matrix \mathbf{P} .

On this basis we shall determine the row proportion:

$$p_{i\bullet} = \sum_{j=1}^c p_{ij} = \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{n_{ij}}{n} = \frac{n_{i\bullet}}{n}$$

and column proportion:

$$p_{\bullet j} = \sum_{i=1}^r p_{ij} = \sum_{i=1}^r \frac{n_{ij}}{n} = \frac{n_{\bullet j}}{n}.$$

These values show the percentage of occurrence of the selected category in the grand total. The row proportions are denoted as vector \mathbf{r} , column proportions as vector \mathbf{c} . Finally, there is expression of the expected proportions $\hat{p}_{ij} = p_{i\bullet} \cdot p_{\bullet j}$, and expected frequencies:

$$n \cdot \hat{p}_{ij} = n \cdot p_{i\bullet} \cdot p_{\bullet j} = n \cdot \frac{n_{i\bullet}}{n} \cdot \frac{n_{\bullet j}}{n} = \frac{n_{i\bullet} \cdot n_{\bullet j}}{n}.$$

Multi-way contingency table is a cross-classification of many nominal variables (Andersen 1997; Jobson 1992). The construction of this table differs from the construction of contingency table by introducing layers in rows, columns or both in rows and columns.

The tables in Figure 1 shows different ways of construction of multi-way contingency tables for three or four variables.

In Stanimir (2005, p. 47) the concept of original variable and combined variable (with two or more variables) was introduced. The construction of the primary variable in the process of building a multi-way contingency table does not change.

The construction of a multi-way contingency table based on primary data is always possible. Creating a multi-way table in the case of secondary data is much more complicated. It is not always possible to identify the number of simultaneous instances of the categories of two combined variables.

In the design of multi-way contingency tables, we should therefore be aware of their complex structure and the fact that the variables should be dependent. Only for these tables is correspondence analysis or mosaic display possible.

The χ^2 test of independence or likelihood ratio test is used for evaluating variables dependence. If all variables are equally important for the research problem, it is possible to create many different multi-way tables. One or both of the independence tests should be done for each of these tables in the following way.

Three variables		M1	M2	M3
S1	W1			
	W2			
S2	W1			
	W2			
S1	W1			
	W2			
S2	W1			
	W2			

Four variables			S1	S2
M1	P1	W1		
		W2		
	P2	W1		
		W2		
M2	P1	W1		
		W2		
	P2	W1		
		W2		
M3	P1	W1		
		W2		
	P2	W1		
		W2		

Four variables		M1		M2		M3	
		P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
S1	W1						
	W2						
S2	W1						
	W2						

Fig. 1. Examples of construction of multidimensional contingency tables for the three and four variables (S, M, P, W).

Source: author's own study based on Stanimir (2005).

When variables A and B are independent $p_{ij} = p_{i\cdot} \cdot p_{\cdot j}$. If the hypothesis of independence is true, the χ^2 statistics

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{(n_{ij} - n \cdot p_{i\cdot} \cdot p_{\cdot j})^2}{n \cdot p_{i\cdot} \cdot p_{\cdot j}}$$

has a χ^2 distribution with $(r-1)(c-1)$ degrees of freedom.

In the Likelihood ratio approach the statistics

$$L^2 = 2 \cdot \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^c n_{ij} \ln \left(\frac{n_{ij}}{\hat{n}_{ij}} \right),$$

where \hat{n}_{ij} are expected frequencies; L^2 “has a χ^2 distribution with $(r-1)(c-1)$ degrees of freedom if the hypothesis of independence is held” (Jobson, 1992, p. 21).

Clausen (1998) and van der Heijden (1987) suggest that further analysis is performed for an array with higher dependences between variables.

3. Mosaic displays

Mosaic displays are a modification of sieve and parquet diagrams. The largest contribution to the dissemination of this type of analysis was made by Friendly (for example 1992, 1994).

A mosaic (sieve) plot is composed of rectangles. In English-language literature there are many terms used for rectangles such as bin, box, tiles (see (Hofmann, 2000; Friendly, 1992)). As a basis of mosaic charts, we can use cumulative bar charts. Each bar is divided vertically, depending on the frequencies of categories of the second variable.

In the case of contingency table analysis, the area of each plate on sieve diagram is proportional to the cell expected frequency. However, the observed frequencies are shown by the number of squares in each rectangle. The difference between the observed and expected cell frequencies is shown by line shading or colours. Positive deviations are presented in one colour or solid lines, negative – a different colour or a dotted line.

On the mosaic plot, each cell of contingency table is presented as a plate whose area corresponds to the cell frequency in the table cell. The width of each rectangle is proportional to column frequencies and the height is proportional to the conditional frequency of each row $n_{i|j} = \frac{n_{ij}}{n_{\cdot j}}$. This

method of mosaic plot construction was proposed by Friendly (1994). In Friendly’s graphs the heights of tiles for row categories are different in correspondence to the following column categories. In Friendly’s plots it is easy to observe the independence of variables because in the case of complete independence the height of tiles in each row will be the same.

Another modification proposed by Friendly (1994) in comparison to sieve diagrams is the use of shading and reordering of corresponding categories (both in rows and in columns). The plot becomes more clear and consistent. Friendly (1994) proposes that the colours and shadings should correspond to the standardized deviations from independence, which are

calculated as $m_{ij} = \frac{(n_{ij} - n\hat{p}_{ij})}{\sqrt{n\hat{p}_{ij}}}$. The shading for a cell with positive deviations

is drawn with black solid lines from upper left to the lower right corner of the tile. When $m_{ij} < 0$ shading is done with a red, broken line from upper right to the lower left corner, the absolute value of deviations is presented in the density of lines placed on the plate. "Cells with absolute values less than 2 are empty and cells with $|m_{ij}| \geq 2$ are filled, those with $|m_{ij}| \geq 4$ are filled with a darker pattern" (Friendly, 1994, p. 191).

In the use of mosaic plots for analyzing data from multi-way contingency table, every tile will be divided. Suppose that the analysis concerns three variables (A, B, W). If the combined variable is defined as $[AB]$, so the analyzed table will be $[AB] [W]$. In this case, each rectangle corresponding to the categories of variable A will be divided into smaller rectangles whose number is consistent with the number of categories of variable B .

4. Correspondence analysis

Correspondence analysis is a method to study associations between categories of nominal variables. But on the measurement scales, it is possible to transform values from stronger to weaker scales (Walesiak, 1996). Therefore, a correspondence analysis may be conducted for variables measured on the stronger scales after the transformation. Correspondence analysis belongs to a group of methods based on the reduction of dimensionality. In the classical correspondence analysis approach the relationships of categories of two nominal variables are examined. Taking indications of Section 2, the full dimensional space is $\min\{r - 1; c - 1\}$. So if each of the nominal variables is described by more than four categories, the graphical presentation of the relationships between them is not possible. Therefore, the singular value decomposition is used and on that basis the best space of presentation of results is chosen. A detailed description of the procedure in the correspondence analysis can be found in Stanimir (2005).

The result of correspondence analysis is presented as a scatter of points showing the categories of the analyzed variables. If the categories derived from two different variables are close together, it means that their co-occurrence is frequent. Points located farthest from the centre of gravity have the most influence on the variable dependences, as opposed to the points located near the centre.

Correspondence analysis of the data from a multi-way contingency table is performed as a classical contingency table analysis. However, note that the each combined variable should be treated as a consistent variable. Consequently, for example, if the analyzed table is constructed as follows: [AB] [W], so its categories are as follows $a_1b_1, a_1b_2, \dots, a_1b_j, a_2b_1, a_2b_2, \dots, a_2b_j, \dots, a_ib_1, a_ib_2, \dots, a_ib_j$. Categories of a combined variable created in that way cannot be shared during the interpretation of the results, which means that the position of the point cannot be interpreted to indicate the category a_2 without any of the categories of variable B .

5. Example of the use of mosaic display and correspondence analysis in the study of economic activity

The statistical yearbook of Labour Force Survey. II quarter 2011 (*Aktywność ekonomiczna...*, 2011) contains data to analyze the problem of economic activity, taking into account many factors. In the conducted study, the author decided to see how the economic activity of the Polish population by gender and education differs. To achieve the research goal, it was necessary to select the following variables:

- economic activity: full-time employed persons (A1), part-time employed persons (A2), unemployed persons (A3), persons economically inactive (A4);
- level of education: tertiary (E1), post-secondary (E2), vocational secondary (E3), general secondary (E4), basic vocational (E5), lower secondary, primary and incomplete primary (E6);
- gender: females (G1), males (M2).

Labour Force in Poland in II quarter 2011 is presented in Table 1.

The analysis of the data from Table 1 with mosaic graphs, has benefited from the software Mosaic Displays proposed by Friendly on web page: <http://euclid.psych.yorku.ca/cgi/mosaics>.

Fillings available in Friendly's software are slightly different from those described earlier. Tiles shading presented in Section 3 is carried out with lines. In Friendly's software squares are used like in sieve diagrams.

Table 1. Economic activity in Poland (II quarter 2011, in thousands): females and males

		Economic activity: females			
		A1	A2	A3	A4
Educational level	E1	2 388	192	159	752
	E2	356	36	44	248
	E3	1 525	166	171	1 327
	E4	652	111	126	1 230
	E5	1 205	179	211	1 495
	E6	333	111	103	3 569

		Economic activity: males			
		A1	A2	A3	A4
Educational level	E1	1 842	96	88	397
	E2	181	7	20	50
	E3	2 216	94	174	782
	E4	581	42	83	478
	E5	2 984	138	345	1 379
	E6	616	112	166	2 294

Source: author's own study based on *Aktywność ekonomiczna...* (2011).

Tiles with positive deviations are drawn with blue colour, with red – negative deviations. If $|m_{ij}| < 2$, the tiles are not filled, when $|m_{ij}| \geq 2$ are filled with squares, those with $|m_{ij}| \geq 4$ are filled with dense squares.

For a given variable it was possible to build three multi-way contingency tables: [EG][A], [AG][E], [AE][G]. However, one third of these tables would contain two columns, and thus the presentation of the results of correspondence analysis would be in R^1 space. The research problem also tends to use this table where the educational level and gender are combined into one variable.

5.1. Breakdown of the level of education by gender in association with economic activity

After creating a new variable, new categories are also created. For correspondence analysis, it is necessary to encode these categories as E1G1 (women with tertiary education), E1G2 (men with tertiary education), E2G1 (women with post-secondary education), E2G2 (men with post-secondary education), ..., E6G1 (women with lower secondary, primary or incomplete primary education), E6G2 (women with lower secondary, primary or incomplete primary education). Table 2 presents this data.

Table 2. Breakdown of the level of education by gender in association with economic activity

		Economic activity			
		A1	A2	A3	A4
Level of education by gender	E1G1	2 388	192	159	752
	E1G2	1 842	96	88	397
	E2G1	356	36	44	248
	E2G2	181	7	20	50
	E3G1	1 525	166	171	1 327
	E3G2	2 216	94	174	782
	E4G1	652	111	126	1 230
	E4G2	581	42	83	478
	E5G1	1 205	179	211	1 495
	E5G2	2 984	138	345	1 379
	E6G1	333	111	103	3 569
	E6G2	616	112	166	2 294

Source: author’s own study based on *Aktywność ekonomiczna...* (2011).

For this data, the χ^2 statistics and likelihood ratio L2 are respectively 7426.6 and 7970.16 on 33 df, indicating the high dependence between variables.

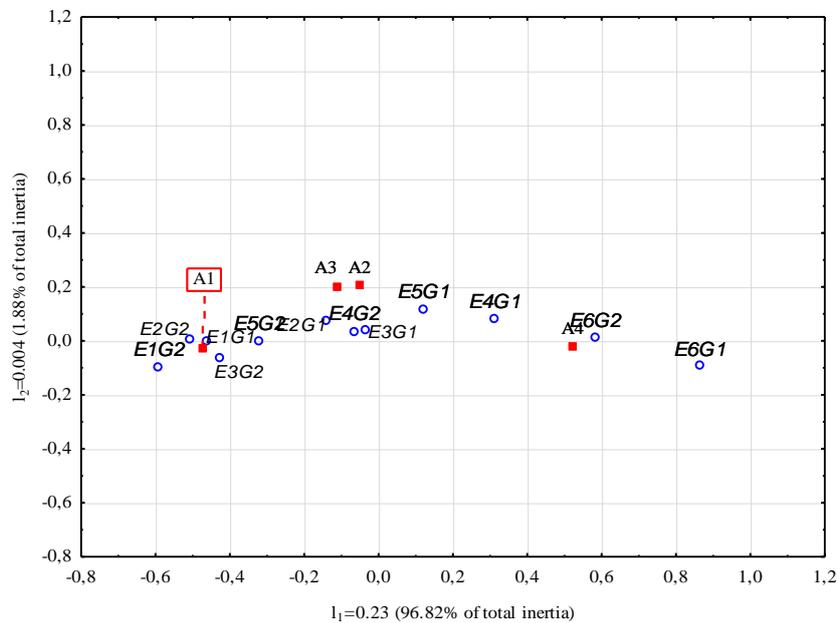


Fig. 2. Correspondence analysis of economic activity and level of education broken down by gender

Source: own study based on *Aktywność ekonomiczna...* (2011).

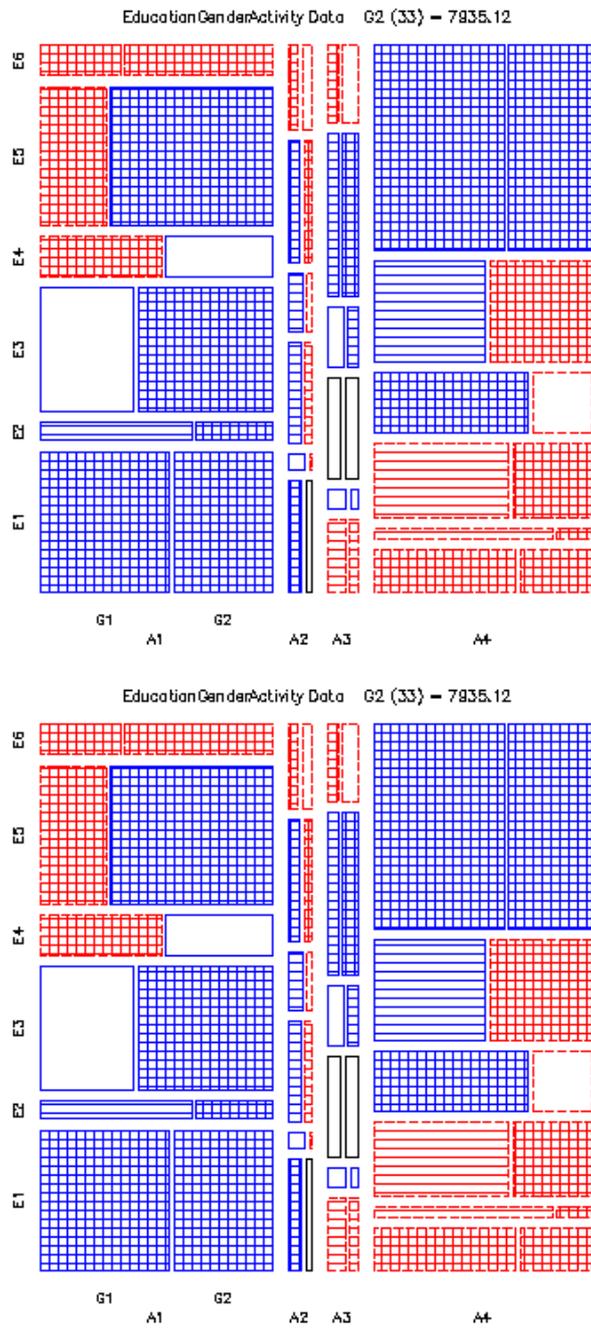


Fig. 3. Mosaic display of economic activity and level of education broken down by gender
Source: author's own study based on *Aktywność ekonomiczna...* (2011).

6. Summary

Methods of graphical presentation of the relationship between nominal variables and their categories described in this paper gave the opportunity for an extensive diagnosis of dependence variables. Correspondence analysis and mosaic plots are based on the same grounds, i.e. contingency table or multi-way contingency table.

Correspondence analysis can be used in the study of relationships between two or more nominal variables without limiting the number of categories. In the case of many variables, very often the multi-dimensional contingency table is used. Only the difficulty of construction of such a table and the combined variables can affect the decision of a researcher about the validity of using this solution.

For mosaic plots the situation is different. These graphs in a very good way represent the relationships between two categories of nominal variables with few categories. The introduction of another variable to the study, which is described by two or three categories is also not too problematic, and the graph is easy to interpret. However, if in a multi-way contingency table variables are combined of several of primary variables, described with many categories, the mosaic plot is no longer as clear as the projection made in the correspondence analysis.

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