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THE QUESTIONNAIRE

METHOD

BASIC INTRODUCTION

The questionnaire method is a part of the structured interview in which a researcher asks a predetermined set of questions using the same wordings and order of questions. A questionnaire is a written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by respondents. Thus, respondents read the questions, interpret what is expected and then write down the answers. The only difference between an interview schedule and questionnaire is that in the former it is the interviewer who asks the questions and records the respondents reply on an interview schedule, and in the latter the replies are recorded by the respondents themselves.

In a questionnaire, as there is no one to explain the meaning of questions to respondents, it is important that the questions are clear and easy to understand. Also the layout of questions should be such that it is easy to read and pleasant to the eyes, and the sequence of questions should be easy to follow. The questionnaire should be developed in an interactive style. This means respondents should feel as if someone is talking to them. In a questionnaire a sensitive question or a question that respondent may feel hesitant about answering should be prefaced by an interactive statement explaining the relevance of the question.

WAYS OF ADMINISTERING A QUESTIONNAIRE

THE MAILED QUESTIONNAIRE:

It includes sending the questionnaire by mail. A mailed questionnaire must be accompanied by a covering letter. One of the major problems with this method is the low response rate. In case of an extremely low response, the findings have very limited applicability to the population studied.

COLLECTIVE ADMINISTRATION:

This requires to obtain a captive audience such as students in a classroom, people attending a function, participants in a programme or people assembled in one place. This ensures a very high response rate.

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE:

With the advancement in communication technology, the use of the online questionnaire to collect information, to answer your research questions has become quite common. Questionnaire is developed in the same way as you normally do using a programme that is usually designed for the purpose. You post it either on a website or provide a link in your email for potential respondents to access it and respond. Before you use this method of data collection, it is important for you to familiarise yourself with the process and programme that you intend to use. In case of emailing it or sending it through mobile phones, you need to get respondents' email addresses and phone numbers.

ADMINISTRATION IN A PUBLIC PLACE:

administering a questionnaire in a public place such as shopping centre, health centre, hospital, school or pub.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF QUESTIONNAIRE METHOD

ADVANTAGES:

1. It is an economical way of collecting information. It doesn't require high cost for conduct of research.
2. It is probably the best method to collect information when the sample population is spread over the larger territory. It permits a nationwide or even international coverage.
3. Replies may be received very quickly in questionnaire method. In this case there is no need to visit the respondent personally or continue the study over a long period.
4. It is suitable in getting special type of response like the information about certain personal or secret matters. For example; information about sexual relationships, marital relationships, secret desires etc.
5. Compared to other methods like interview, schedule, questionnaire method is regarded as more useful and cheap, where the repetitive information has to be collected at regular interval.
6. Questionnaire method is comparatively an easier method to plan, construct and administer. It doesn't require much technical skill or knowledge.
7. It puts less pressure on the respondents to respond immediately. He can answer it at his own leisure.
8. It is uniform. It helps in focusing the respondents' attention on all the significant

items.

9. Questionnaire may be used as a preliminary tool for conducting a depth study later or by any other method.

10. It has greater validity, ensures anonymity to its respondents and is the most flexible tool for data collection.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Limited response. It can neither be used for illiterate nor for semi literate person.

2. Lack of personal contact.

3. Poor response.

4. Unreliability.

5. Handwriting is sometimes illegible.

6. Many questions are incomplete or left out.

7. Possibility of manipulated entries.

8. Can't be used for in-depth studies.

9. The respondents who return the questionnaire may not constitute a representative section of the entire group.

10. Lack of rapport with the subject and is not suitable for delicate issues.