

## Interview Method in Research

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### Abstract

Interviews have been used extensively for data collection in the field of research. Interview is not just asking and answering questions, it is beyond the oral aspect which the interviewer may observe the interviewee behavior, personality, opinion, way of thinking and beliefs. Interviewing is one of the chief means through which most of the information used in social diagnosis is secured from the interviewee. This method of research can also show the truth by observing the interviewee expression with the question that been asked. It can discover if the information is accurate and if there are contradictions between the sources of information. This topic will discuss the interview types and its importance in the field of research.

**Key words:** Interview, Research, Data collection

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### Introduction

A method of data collection, information or opinion gathering that specifically involves asking a series of questions. However, developments in computer and information technology have resulted in other formats, for example, Internet interviews. Interviews are typically associated with both quantitative and qualitative research and are often used alongside other methods. Most commonly, interviews are conducted on a face-to-face basis. It is a direct method of direct collection of data. It is recognized as the most important method of collection of data. Through this method, we can know the views and ideas of other persons. It is systematized method of mutual contact of people.

The purpose of interviews provides a basis for limiting communications and eliminating extraneous material.<sup>1</sup>

### **Meaning and definitions**

As defined by **P. V. Young**<sup>2</sup> it means “The interview may be regarded a systematic method by which one person enters more or less imaginatively into the inner life of another who is generally a comparative stranger to him.”

**According to Young** “The interview is a technique of field work which is used to watch the behavior of an individual or individuals to record statements, to observe the concrete results of social or group interaction. It is, therefore, a social process

which is usually involves interaction between two persons.”

**According to Khalid M.**<sup>3</sup> “Interview is fundamentally a process of social interaction. In the interview two persons are not just present at the same place, but also influence each other emotionally and intellectually.”

#### **Characteristics of interview method**

1. It is a close contact or interaction including dialogue between two or more persons.
2. There is definite object of interview, such as knowing the views and ideas of others.
3. There is face to face contact or primary relationship between the individuals.
4. Through this method data are collected in research.

#### **Major objectives of Interview**

- Collecting information about unknown facts
- Formulation of hypothesis
- Collecting information about qualitative facts
- Collecting additional information or views of different persons about different problems in different situations

- Method of observation or an opportunity to observe things
- To examine the emotional state, thought process, orientation, and memory of the respondents.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Types of Interview**

Interview has been categorized on the basis of various characteristics and qualities. In this method, the interviewer and the interviewee come in close contact and exchange thoughts. In fact this technique has a socio-psychological base. It has an **object, a process, function and nature.**

Interview may be classified according to the following grounds.

- ❖ **Classification of interview on the basis of object:** - Interview is done with certain object or objects in view. It is taken either for ascertaining certain weaknesses and making attempts to remove certain things. From the point of view of the objects, the interview may further be classified:

**Clinical interview.** This is an interview through which attempt is made to know the causes of certain abnormalities. Once the causes have been ascertained the remedy is sought.

**Selection interview.** This type of interview is done with the object of selecting a person on the basis of certain traits and qualities. The interviewer through interview ascertains the qualities that are required and makes selection.

**Diagnostic interview.** When the object of the interview has been found out the serious causes of some social events or problem, it is called diagnostic interview. This interview is confined to finding out the causes.

**Research interview.** This is in fact a kind of diagnostic interview in which we are try to find out the causes of problem. But in this method, a comprehensive study is made of the problem so that the causes will be finding out in detail.

❖ **Classification of interview on the basis of functions and methodology**

Interviews may be further classified as:

**Non-directed interview.** This is an uncontrolled interview in which no classification plan is drawn about questions to be asked. Through dialogue and conversation, the informant is encouraged to exhibit and express his knowledge and views. The interviewer, in this type of interview collects the information.

**Focused interview.** This is also called a controlled interview. The main object of this type of interview is to test a particular hypothesis. The questions in this interview are pre-determined and pre-planned. The questions are framed on the basis of explanations about the behavior of man about which study has already been made and hypothesis formulated. Such interviews are generally based on pre-determined or pre-studied situations. They are generally used for testing the social and psychological reactions. It has the following characteristics:

It is carried on the persons who are connected from the situation before hand.

This type of interview is useful only about which the study is available beforehand.

These types of interview are carried out with the help of a pre-determined plan or guidebook.

This type of interview is generally useful in testing the reactions and attitudes, ideas and feelings of the individual informant.

**Repeated interview.** These types of interviews are considered very useful. They are carried out after certain interviews in a repeated manner. The main task of these interviews is to study those dynamic

functions and attitudes that influence, guide and determine the behavior of study of human behavior. They save a lot of time and energy as compared to the result that is secured through this type of interview.

❖ **Classification of interview on the basis of number of informants or respondents**

**Group interview.** In this method two or more persons are interviewed. It helps in gathering the routine information. This method is economical of time and money. but information obtained is very superficial in nature.

**Individual interview.** Single person is interviewed in this method. Close personal contacts between the interviewer and the interviewee can be established. This method is uneconomical of time and money. Intimate and the personal aspects of the individual can be obtained.

❖ **Classification of interview on the basis of forms**

On the basis of form or nature, interview may further be classified as:

**Structured interviews.** This is a type of interview in which the form is already determined or planned. There is everything written about the material to be collected.

The interviewer or the field worker has only to carry out the instructions. Corbetta<sup>5</sup> states structured interviews are “Interviews in which all respondents are asked the same questions with the same wording and in the same sequence.” The strengths of structured interviews are that the researcher has control over the topics and the format of the interview. The researcher’s verbal comments and non-verbal cues can cause bias and have an influence upon respondents’ answers.

**Semi structured.** Interviews and questionnaires are less focused than structured and can be used to focus and elaborate on key points of interest. There is a degree of flexibility and breadth to allow the interviewee/respondent to expand on an answer of interest or concern. “More or less open-ended questions are brought to the interview situation in the form of an interview guide”.<sup>6</sup> The strengths of semi-structured interviews are that the researcher can prompt and probe deeper into the given situation. The drawbacks are inexperienced interviewers may not be able to ask prompt questions. If this is the case, some relevant data may not be gathered. In addition,

inexperienced interviewers may not probe into a situation.

**Unstructured or informal interview.** This type of interview is non-directed and is a flexible method. Interviews and questionnaires are useful when soliciting opinions and attitudes; interviewees are asked to respond to broad, open-ended questions. In an unstructured interview the researcher has to be a good listener and note new or interesting data the interviewee gives.

The strengths of unstructured interviews are no restrictions are placed on questions. It is useful when little or no knowledge exists about a topic. So, background data can be collected. Unstructured interviews are flexible and the researcher can investigate underlying motives. The drawbacks of unstructured interviews are that they can be inappropriate for inexperienced interviewers. The interviewers may be bias and ask inappropriate questions. Also, respondents may talk about irrelevant and inconsequential issues. Consequently, it may be difficult to code and analyze the data.

❖ **Classification of interview on the basis of the period of contact:**

**Short contact interview.** Helps in filling up the schedules, tables etc. A short duration of such an interview is sufficient.

**Prolonged contact interview.** In contact with research by schedule, the case history method needs prolonged interviews.

❖ **Classification of interview on the basis of subject manner**

**Qualitative interview.** This method involves non quantifiable subject matter. e.g. interviews held for the case studies.

**Quantitative interview.** Certain facts for a large number of persons are gathered. e.g. census interviews.

**Mixed interview.** Both routine and specialized data is sought. Some of it may be quantifiable while some of it may be non quantifiable.

**Merits and Advantages of Interview method**

This method of study is quite popular in the field of research particularly when the study deals with the personal life of the respondents or their emotions, feelings, perceptions and behavior in work situations. The data required in such study

are inside the individual and which alone is capable of communicating. Some of the scientists are of the view that it is not possible to reduce social phenomena to statistical analysis and therefore interview method is the best method of study. This method has the following advantages or merits:

Interviews are more appropriate for obtaining information relating to complex and emotional issues.

Personal interviews are preferred by the respondents because most of the people enjoy talking to a friendly interviewer rather than be burdened with providing written responses.

In case of interview the interviewer is in a position to ensure that the questions are correctly understood by the respondents.

The interviewer is in a better position to judge the validity of answer because he can observe the gestures of respondents.

#### ❖ **Disadvantages or Limitations of the Interview method**

The interview method of study, in spite of its advantages and utility for research has certain weaknesses in it. The weaknesses, disadvantages or limitations of this method are enumerated below:

The data collected are of a doubtful character.

Too much dependence on memory.

Difference in the social background of the interviewer and the possibility of discrimination between the two.

Specialized knowledge is not always possible.

Danger of unnecessary details.

Lot of subjectivity and individual feelings

Play of inferiority complex.

Too much importance to respondent and influence of emotions and sentiments

#### ❖ **Ethical Issues**

In conducting interviews, ethical issues are one of the main concerns. Confidentiality must be given. "Respondents should not be harmed or damaged in any way by the research. It is also important that interviews are not used as a devious means of selling something to the respondent"<sup>7</sup>. If respondents are uneasy and become upset, the interview can be cancelled or postponed. The following is a list of some of the issues and suggested ethical solutions<sup>7,8</sup>.

- Explain purpose. Explain the purpose of the inquiry to the respondent.
- Promises and reciprocity. State what the respondent will gain.

- Risk assessment. Consider in what ways might the interview put the respondent at risk in terms of stress, legal liabilities, ostracism or political repercussion.
- Confidentiality. Reflect on the extent to which promises of confidentiality can be met.
- Inform consent. What kind of consent is necessary, if any.
- Data access and ownership. Evaluate who has the right to access data and for what purpose.
- Mental health. Consider how interviewer and interviewee mental health may be affected by conducting the interview.
- Advice. Appoint an adviser on ethical matters during the course of the study.
- Data collection boundaries. How hard will you push for data? What lengths will you go to in trying to gain access to data you want? What won't you do?
- How hard will you push interviewees to respond to questions about which they show some discomfort? When an interview has been completed and is considered a good interview, the respondents ought to know more about themselves and their situation. However, the researcher must remember that the purpose of research is to collect data and

not to change the respondents or their opinions.

#### ❖ Conclusion

This article discusses interview method in research. Interviews are one way to collect data and to gain knowledge from individuals. The type of interview to conduct will depend upon the objectives of the research.

Lastly, ethical issues are of paramount importance so it is also examined.

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