

Course: BBA Part II

Paper: XI

Topic: Data Collection Methods

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1. Observation:

Observation method has occupied an important place in descriptive sociological research. It is the most significant and common technique of data collection. Analysis of questionnaire responses is concerned with what people think and do as revealed by what they put on paper. The responses in interview are revealed by what people express in conversation with the interviewer. Observation seeks to ascertain what people think and do by watching them in action as they express themselves in various situations and activities.

Observation is the process in which one or more persons observe what is occurring in some real life situation and they classify and record pertinent happenings according to some planned schemes. It is used to evaluate the overt behaviour of individuals in controlled or uncontrolled situation. It is a method of research which deals with the external behaviour of persons in appropriate situations.

2. Interview:

Interview as a technique of data collection is very popular and extensively used in every field of social research. The interview is, in a sense, an oral questionnaire. Instead of writing the response, the interviewee or subject gives the needed information verbally in a face-to-face relationship. The dynamics of interviewing, however, involves much more than an oral questionnaire.

Interview is relatively more flexible tool than any written inquiry form and permits explanation, adjustment and variation according to the situation. The observational methods, as we know, are restricted mostly to non-verbal acts. So these are understandably not so effective in giving

information about person's past and private behaviour, future actions, attitudes, perceptions, faiths, beliefs thought processes, motivations etc.

3. Schedule:

Schedule is one of the very commonly used tools of data collection in scientific investigation. P.V. Young says "The schedule has been used for collection of personal preferences, social attitudes, beliefs, opinions, behaviour patterns, group practices and habits and much other data". The increasing use of schedule is probably due to increased emphasis by social scientists on quantitative measurement of uniformly accumulated data.

Schedule is very much similar to questionnaire and there is very little difference between the two so far as their construction is concerned. The main difference between these two is that whereas the schedule is used in direct interview or direct observation and in it the questions are asked and filled by the researcher himself, the questionnaire is generally mailed to the respondent, who fills it up and returns it to the researcher. Thus the main difference between them lies in the method of obtaining data.

4. Questionnaire:

Questionnaire provides the most speedy and simple technique of gathering data about groups of individuals scattered in a wide and extended field. In this method, a questionnaire form is sent usually by post to the persons concerned, with a request to answer the questions and return the questionnaire.

According to Goode and Hatt "It is a device for securing answers to questions by using a form which the respondent fills in himself. According to GA. Lundberg "Fundamentally the questionnaire is a set of stimuli to which illiterate people are exposed in order to observe their verbal behaviour under these stimuli".

Often the term "questionnaire" and "schedule" are considered as synonyms. Technically, however, there is a difference between these two terms. A questionnaire consists of a set of questions printed or typed in a systematic order on a form or set of forms. These form or forms are usually sent by the post to the respondents who are expected to read and understand the

questions and reply to them in writing in the spaces given for the purposes on the said form or forms. Here the respondents have to answer the questions on their own.

On the other hand schedule is also a form or set of forms containing a number of questions. But here the researcher or field worker puts the question to the respondent in a face to face situation, clarifies their doubts, offers the necessary explanation and most significantly fills their answers in the relevant spaces provided for the purpose.

Since the questionnaire is sent to a selected number of individuals, its scope is rather limited but within its limited scope it can prove to be the most effective means of eliciting information, provided that it is well formulated and the respondent fills it properly.

A properly constructed and administered questionnaire may serve as a most appropriate and useful data gathering device.

5. Projective Techniques:

The psychologists and psychiatrists had first devised projective techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of patients afflicted by emotional disorders. Such techniques are adopted to present a comprehensive profile of the individual's personality structure, his conflicts and complexes and his emotional needs. Adoption of such techniques is not an easy affair. It requires intensive specialized training.

The stimuli applied in projective tests may arouse in the individuals, undergoing the tests, varieties of reaction. Hence, in projective tests the individual's responses to the stimulus situation are not considerate at their face value because there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. Rather emphasis is laid on his perception or the meaning he attaches to it and the way in which the endeavors to manipulate it or organizes it.

The purpose is never clearly indicated by the nature of the stimuli and the way of their presentation. This also does not provide the way of interpretation of the responses. Since the individual is not asked to describe about himself directly and since he is provided with stimulus in the form of a photograph or a picture or on ink- blot, etc., the responses to these stimuli are

construed as the indicators of the individual's own view of the world, his personality structure, his needs, tensions and anxieties etc., says Bell.

6. Case Study Method:

According to Biesanz and Biesenz "the case study is a form of qualitative analysis involving the very careful and complete observation of a person, a situation or an institution." In the words of Goode and Hatt, "Case study is a way of organizing social data so as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied." P.V. Young defines case study as a method of exploring and analyzing the life of a social unit, be that a person, a family, an institution, cultural group or even entire community."

In the words of Giddings "the case under investigation may be one human individual only or only an episode in first life or it might conceivably be a Nation or an epoch of history." Ruth Strong maintains that "the case history or study is a synthesis and interpretation of information about a person and his relationship to his environment collected by means of many techniques."

Shaw and Clifford hold that "case study method emphasizes the total situation or combination of factors, the description of the process or consequences of events in which behaviour occurs, the study of individual behaviour in its total setting and the analysis and comparison of cases leading to formulation of hypothesis."