

## Interview method in research

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Generally interviews take many forms, some very informal, others more structured.

### Structured Interview

A structured interview is a quantitative research method where the interviewer asks a set of prepared closed-ended questions in the form of an interview schedule, which he/she reads out exactly as worded. A structured interview is also known as a formal interview (like a job interview).

#### Strengths

1. Structured interviews are easy to replicate as a fixed set of closed questions are used, which are easy to quantify this means it is easy to test for reliability.
2. Structured interviews are fairly quick to conduct which means that many interviews can take place within a short amount of time. This means a large sample can be obtained resulting in the findings being representative and having the ability to be generalized to a large population.

#### Limitations

1. Structure interviews are not flexible. This means new questions cannot be asked impromptu (i.e. during the interview) as an interview schedule must be followed.
2. The answers from structured interviews lack detail as only closed questions are asked which generates quantitative data. This means a researcher won't know why a person behaves in a certain way.

## Unstructured Interview

Unstructured interviews do not use any set questions, instead, the interviewer asks open-ended questions based on a specific research topic, and will try to let the interview flow like a natural conversation. The interviewer modifies his or her questions to suit the candidate's specific experiences.

Unstructured interviews are sometimes referred to as 'discovery interviews' and are more like a 'guided conversation' than a strict structured interview. They are sometimes called informal interviews.

### Strengths

1. Unstructured interviews are more flexible as questions can be adapted and changed depending on the respondents' answers.
2. Unstructured interviews generate qualitative data through the use of open questions. This allows the respondent to talk in some depth, choosing their own words. This helps the researcher develop a real sense of a person's understanding of a situation.
3. They also have increased validity because it gives the interviewer the opportunity to probe for a deeper understanding, ask for clarification & allow the interviewee to steer the direction of the interview etc.

### Limitations

1. It can be time-consuming to conduct an unstructured interview and analyze the qualitative data.
2. Employing and training interviewers is expensive, and not as cheap as collecting data via questionnaires. For example, certain skills may be needed by the interviewer.

## Focus Group Interview

Focus group interview is a qualitative approach where a group of respondents are interviewed together, used to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population.

### Strengths

1. Group interviews generate qualitative narrative data through the use of open questions. This allows the respondents to talk in some depth, choosing their own words. This helps the researcher develop a real sense of a person's understanding of a situation. Qualitative data also includes observational data, such as body language and facial expressions.
2. They also have increased validity because some participants may feel more comfortable being with others as they are used to talking in groups in real life.

### Limitations

1. The researcher must ensure that they keep all the interviewees' details confidential and respect their privacy. This is difficult when using a group interview. For example, the researcher cannot guarantee that the other people in the group will keep information private.
2. Group interviews are less reliable as they use open questions and may deviate from the interview schedule making them difficult to repeat.
2. Group interviews may sometimes lack validity as participants may lie to impress the other group members. They may conform to peer pressure and give false answers.

### Qualities of a good interviewer

- First, an interviewer must choose whether to use a structured or non-structured interview.
- An interviewer has to consider who will be the interviewer, and this will depend on what type of person is being interviewed.
- The accent and appearance of the interviewer can have an effect on the rapport between the interviewer and interviewee.
- The language the interviewer uses should be appropriate to the vocabulary of the group of people being studied. For example, the researcher must change the language of questions to match the social background of respondents' age, educational level, etc.
- The interviewer must ensure that they take special care when interviewing vulnerable groups, such as children. For example, children have a limited attention span and for this reason, lengthy interviews should be avoided.