

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325846992>

# PREPARING QUESTIONNAIRE

Chapter · July 2016

---

CITATIONS

5

---

READS

143,182

1 author:



[Syed Muhammad Sajjad Kabir](#)  
Curtin University

109 PUBLICATIONS 724 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

## CHAPTER - 8

# PREPARING QUESTIONNAIRE

### Topics Covered

- 8.1 Questionnaire in Research Methodology
- 8.2 Questionnaire and Schedule
- 8.3 Qualities of A Good Questionnaire
- 8.4 Types of Questions
- 8.5 Development of A Questionnaire
- 8.6 Preparing and Administering Questionnaire
- 8.7 Questionnaire Wording

### 8.1 QUESTIONNAIRE IN RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire can be a useful tool for gathering information. It can be used for survey research, gathering data or testing a hypothesis. For a questionnaire to be effective and give you the information you are looking for, you will need to design a survey that is easy to understand and easy to complete. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. The questionnaire was invented by Sir Francis Galton. A questionnaire refers to a device for securing answers to questions by using a form which the respondent fills in by himself. It consists of a number of questions printed or typed in a definite order. These forms are actually mailed to the respondent who was expected to read and understand the questions and reply to them by writing the relevant answers in the spaces provided. Ideally speaking respondent must answer to a verbal stimulus and give a written or verbal response. It is totally devoid of any table. Its purpose is to collect information from the respondents who are scattered over a vast area. Goode and Hatt have defined questionnaire as a device for securing answers to questions by using a form which the respondent fills himself. According to Barr, Davis and Johnson "A questionnaire is a systematic compilation of questions that are submitted to a sampling of population from which information is desired". In educational researches, the questionnaire consists of a series of questions or statements to which individuals are asked to respond the questions frequently asked for facts or the opinions, attitudes or preferences of the respondents. Beginners are more commonly tempted to this tool, because they imagine that planning and using a questionnaire is easier than the use of other tools. It is also considered to be the most flexible of tools and possesses a unique advantage over others in collecting both qualitative and quantitative information. Critics speak of it as the lazy man's way of gaining information, because it is comparatively easy to plan and administer a questionnaire. As a matter of fact, preparation of a good questionnaire takes a great deal of time, ingenuity and hard work.

In descriptive studies where the sources are varied and widely scattered, the questionnaire is a major instrument for gathering data. It is very handy in cases, where one cannot conveniently see personally all the people from whom the responses are required. This technique finds favour in determination of present status in certain aspects of education-current practice in schools, financial aspects service conditions of teachers, etc. It can be used over extensive range of territory-national and international. As research techniques are becoming more and more refined day after day, it is hoped that this wayward child of the science of education will soon curb its unruly disposition and also mend its unseemly ways.

### 8.2 QUESTIONNAIRE AND SCHEDULE

A schedule however, takes more time as compared to a questionnaire. A questionnaire has less data collecting ability than a schedule. A questionnaire can cover a very wide field of data whereas a schedule is a problem oriented data collecting method. A questionnaire takes for itself and is self-explanatory, whereas schedule has to be explained by the investigator. The similarities and differences between schedule and questionnaire are stated below-

Similarities between Schedule and Questionnaire

- Both are set of related items having questions relating to a central problems.
- Both use mainly structured questions and these questions are so phased and interlocked that they have a built in mechanism for testing the reliability and validity of the response.
- In both the same set of questions is administered to all the respondents and comparable results are obtained.

- Both these instruments have to be used with the same general principles of designs and have to take into account the same problems and basic difficulties they have to be limited in length.
- In both, the central problem has to be concentrated upon the following considerations involved in the problem of evolving the questionnaire and a schedule as a unit. (a) Drawing the respondent into a situation through awake and interest. (b) Proceeding from simple to complex questions. (c) No early and sudden request for information of a personal and embracing intimate nature. (d) Not asking embarrassing questions without giving the respondent an opportunity to explain himself. (e) Moving smoothly from one item to another.
- In both certain types of questions have to be eliminated such as vague and ambiguous questions, emotionally charged questions, loaded and leading questions, questions eliciting no response and questions having structured response to the queries, violence to the existing facts.
- In both pilot studies and pre-tests are necessary for formulating the instrument and for bringing them to the final form. They have to go through the same stages of development.

#### Differences between Schedule and Questionnaire

Both schedule and questionnaire are popularly used methods of collecting data in research surveys. The important points of difference are as under -

- The questionnaire is generally sent through mail to informants to be answered as specified in a covering letter, but otherwise without further assistance from the sender. The schedule is generally filled out by the research worker or the enumerator, who can interpret questions when necessary.
- To collect data through questionnaire is relatively cheap and economical since we have to spend money only in preparing the questionnaire and in mailing the same to respondents. Here no field staff required. To collect data through schedules is relatively more expensive since considerable amount of money has to be spent in appointing enumerators and in importing training to them. Money is also spent in preparing schedules.
- Non-response is usually high in case of questionnaire as many people do not respond and many return the questionnaire without answering all questions. As against this, non-response is generally very low in case of schedules because these are filled by enumerators who are able to get answers to all questions. But there remains the danger of interviewer bias and cheating.
- In case of questionnaire, it is not always clear as to who replies, but in case of schedule the identity of respondent is known.
- The questionnaire method is likely to be very slow since many respondents do not return the questionnaire in time despite several reminders, but in case of schedules the information is collected well in time as they are filled in by enumerators.
- Personal contact is generally not possible in case of the questionnaire method as questionnaires are sent to respondents by post who also in turn return the same by post. But in case of schedules direct personal contact is established with respondents.
- Questionnaire method can be used only when respondents are literate and cooperative, but in case of schedules the information can be gathered even when the respondents happen to be illiterate.
- Wider and more representative distribution of sample is possible under the questionnaire method, but in respect of schedules there usually remains the difficulty in sending enumerators over a relatively wider area.
- Risk of collecting incomplete and wrong information is relatively more under the questionnaire method, particularly when people are unable to understand questions properly. But in case of schedules, the information collected is generally complete and accurate as enumerators can remove the difficulties, if any, faced by respondents in correctly understanding the questions. As a result, the information collected through schedules is relatively more accurate than that obtained through

questionnaires.

- The success of questionnaire method lies more on the quality of the questionnaire itself, but in the case of schedules much depends upon the honesty and competence of enumerators.
- In order to attract the attention of respondents, the physical appearance of questionnaire must be quite attractive, but this may not be so in case of schedules as they are to be filled in by enumerators and not by respondents.
- Along with schedules, observation method can also be used but such a thing is not possible while collecting data through questionnaires.

Table 8.1

*Differences between Schedule and Questionnaire*

Schedule	SN	Questionnaire
A schedule is the list of upcoming events or actions.	1.	A questionnaire is the list of questions handed out to people needing answers.
It is the direct method for information collection.	2.	It is a type of non-contact method for information collection.
There is a person to person formal relationship.	3.	There is no person to person formal relationship.
This method can be implemented on both literate as well as illiterate class people.	4.	This method can be implemented only on literate class people.
This method is expensive and less time consuming.	5.	This method is comparatively cheaper and more time consuming.
Interviewer is biased or known in advance.	6.	Interviewer is not known in advance.
Embarrassing questions can be used.	7.	Embarrassing questions cannot be used.
The coverage area for collecting information is small.	8.	The coverage area for collecting information is large.
Any kind of doubt can be cleared on the spot.	9.	Any kind of doubt can be created and it is difficult to resolve.
Non response is usually very low	10.	Non response is usually very high.
This may not be the case as schedules are to be filled in by enumerators and not by respondents.	11.	The physical appearance of questionnaire must be quite attractive.
Along with schedule observation method can also be used.	12.	This is not possible when collecting data through questionnaire.

### 8.3 QUALITIES OF A GOOD QUESTIONNAIRE

Of course it is expected that the questionnaires should be printed on good papers and that the quality of printing should be good and also that printing errors should be avoided, but every question cannot be called a good question. That is the reason that structuring of questionnaire is considered a technique and that only few skillful persons can structure good questions. Of a good questionnaire it is expected that -

- ❖ Language of the question should be concise. It should be directed towards producing uniformity of understanding among the respondents. It is always essential that care should be taken to see that respondents should not interpret the language in different manner.
- ❖ Language should be clear and straightforward and long involved sentences which require extended concentration should be avoided.
- ❖ Such phrases and expressions which are understood by only few persons and are not in common use should be avoided.

- ❖ If the questionnaire is being mailed to a group of persons who are not experts in terminology then technical words and jargons should be avoided, otherwise the mortality rate will be high, because the informants will not understand the meaning of the terms.
- ❖ Questions and statements of leading character-ones that put replies into the mouth of the respondent should be guarded against. The wording of the questions should not make it easier to say yes or no or vice-versa.
- ❖ Units of questions should be precisely stated or defined in order to ensure proper orientation of respondent.
- ❖ When the information sought relates to definite time period, such as fiscal or calendar year, the specific period should be stated in the questionnaire. Phrases such as this year or last year will not do.
- ❖ Subjective words such as 'bad', 'good', 'fair' and the like do not lend themselves either to quantitative or qualitative and as such should be avoided.
- ❖ Questions themselves should be precise and long questions should be avoided.
- ❖ No single question should deal with more than one issue and as such the principle of one question, one issue should be followed.
- ❖ Vocabulary employed in the questions should be appropriate to the background of the respondents i.e., technical language should be used when the respondents have technical background.
- ❖ Sequence of questions should be such that it will make sense to the respondents. The questions should be so sequenced that the respondent is motivated and answers all questions.
- ❖ Non-sensitive and easily answerable questions should be kept in the beginning whereas difficult and sensitive questions should be kept at the bottom.
- ❖ Questions should be so worded that ego of the respondents is not injured in any way.
- ❖ All the questions should be analytical i.e., these should specifically deal with that aspect of the problem about which study is being made.
- ❖ Amount of writing required on the questionnaire should be kept to the minimum.
- ❖ It is always better to add few questions that will serve as checks on the accuracy and consistency of the answers being given.
- ❖ As far as possible such questions which call for responses towards socially accepted norms and values should be avoided.
- ❖ Complex questions that require the respondent to go through several steps of reasoning before answering are undesirable and as such should be avoided.
- ❖ Questions on controversial issues should be broken down into components, so that the tester can determine the respondent's feelings about many aspects of the problem, including those whom s/he refuses to comment upon. A series of specific questions is needed, sometimes as filtered questions in order to gather adequately the reactions to all sides of the issue.
- ❖ When questions aim at seeking degree of intensity or feeling, it is better to find out the extent to which the respondent's attitudes have been crystallized towards the subject.
- ❖ Only such questions should be asked about which it is believed that the people have sufficient information. If questions on such subjects are asked about which respondent has no information these should not be asked.

- ❖ While deciding about the length of the questions and statements, respondent's comprehension should be taken into account. If the question is too long it should be split up in the best possible manner.

#### 8.4 TYPES OF QUESTIONS

The types of a questionnaire will depend on whether the researcher wishes to collect exploratory information (i.e. qualitative information for the purposes of better understanding or the generation of hypotheses on a subject) or quantitative information (to test specific hypotheses that have previously been generated).

**Exploratory Questionnaires:** If the data to be collected is qualitative or is not to be statistically evaluated, it may be that no formal questionnaire is needed. For example, in interviewing the female head of the household to find out how decisions are made within the family when purchasing foodstuffs, a formal questionnaire may restrict the discussion and prevent a full exploration of the woman's views and processes. Instead one might prepare a brief guide, listing perhaps ten major open-ended questions, with appropriate probes/prompts listed under each.

**Formal Standardized Questionnaires:** If the researcher is looking to test and quantify hypotheses and the data is to be analyzed statistically, a formal standardized questionnaire is designed.

In basis of questionnaire formats, there are two types of questionnaires, open-ended and closed-ended.

**1. Open Format Questions:** Open format questions or open-ended questions give your audience an opportunity to express their opinions in a free-flowing manner. These questions don't have predetermined set of responses and the respondent is free to answer whatever s/he feels right. By including open format questions in your questionnaire, you can get true, insightful and even unexpected suggestions. Qualitative questions fall under this category. An ideal questionnaire would include an open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire that seeks feedback and/or suggestions for improvements from respondents. Example - state your opinion about the quality of unilever's products and services.

There are lots of different types of open question-

**A. Leading or Loaded Questions:** A leading question, usually subtly, points the respondent's answer in a certain direction. Asking an employee, *'How are you getting on with the new finance system?'* This question prompts the person to question how they are managing with a new system at work. In a very subtle way it raises the prospect that maybe they are not finding the new system so good. *'Tell me how you're getting on with the new finance system'* is a less leading question - the question does not require any judgment to be made and therefore does not imply that there may be something wrong with the new system. Children are particularly susceptible to leading questions and are more likely to take the lead for an answer from an adult. Something simple like, *'Did you have a good day at school?'* points the child towards thinking about good things that happened at school. By asking, *'How was school today?'* you are not asking for any judgment about how good or bad the day has been and you are more likely to get a more balanced, accurate answer. This can shape the rest of the conversation, the next question may be, *'What did you do at school?'* - the answer to this may vary based on the first question you asked - good things or just *things*.

**B. Recall and Process Questions:** Questions can also be categorized by whether they are 'recall' - requiring something to be remembered or recalled, or 'process' - requiring some deeper thought and/or analysis. A simple recall question could be, *'What is your mother's maiden name?'* This requires the respondent to recall some information from memory, a fact. A school teacher may ask



recall questions of their pupils, *'What is the highest mountain?'* Process questions require more thought and analysis and/or a sharing of opinion. Examples include, *'What skills can you bring to this organization that the other applicants cannot?'* or *'What are the advantages and disadvantages of asking leading questions to children?'*

C. Rhetorical Questions: Rhetorical questions are often humorous and don't require an answer. These types of questions are often used by speakers in presentations to get the audience to think. Rhetorical questions are, by design, used to promote thought. Politicians, lecturers, priests and others may use rhetorical questions when addressing large audiences to help keep attention. *'Who would not hope to stay healthy into old age?'* is not a question that requires an answer, but our brains are programmed to think about it thus keeping us more engaged with the speaker.

D. Funneling: We can use clever questioning to essentially funnel the respondent's answers - that is ask a series of questions that become more (or less) restrictive at each step, starting with open questions and ending with closed questions or vice-versa. For example - tell me about your most recent holiday. What did you see while you were there? Were there any good restaurants? Did you try some local delicacies? The questions in this example become more restrictive, starting with open questions which allow for very broad answers, at each step the questions become more focused and the answers become more restrictive. Funneling can work the other way around, starting with closed questions and working up to more open questions. For a counselor or interrogator these funneling techniques can be a very useful tactic to find out the maximum amount of information, by beginning with open questions and then working towards more closed questions. In contrast, when meeting somebody new it is common to start by asking more closed questions and progressing to open questions as both parties relax.

E. Responses: As there are a myriad of questions and question types so there must also be a myriad of possible responses. Theorists have tried to define the types of responses that people may have to questions, the main and most important ones are-

- A direct and honest response - this is what the questioner would usually want to achieve from asking their question.
- A lie - the respondent may lie in response to a question. The questioner may be able to pick up on a lie based on plausibility of the answer but also on the non-verbal communication that was used immediately before, during and after the answer is given.
- Out of context - the respondent may say something that is totally unconnected or irrelevant to the question or attempt to change the topic. It may be appropriate to reword a question in these cases.
- Partially answering - people can often be selective about which questions or parts of questions they wish to answer.
- Avoiding the answer - politicians are especially well known for this trait. When asked a 'difficult question' which probably has an answer that would be negative to the politician or their political party, avoidance can be a useful tact. Answering a question with a question or trying to draw attention to some positive aspect of the topic are methods of avoidance.
- Stalling - although similar to avoiding answering a question, stalling can be used when more time is needed to formulate an acceptable answer. One way to do this is to answer the question with another question.
- Distortion - people can give distorted answers to questions based on their perceptions of social norms, stereotypes and other forms of bias. Different from lying, respondents may not realize



their answers are influenced by bias or they exaggerate in some way to come across as more 'normal' or successful. People often exaggerate about their salaries.

- Refusal – the respondent may simply refuse to answer, either by remaining silent or by saying, 'I am not answering'.

**2. Closed Format Questions:** Multiple choice questions, where respondents are restricted to choose among any of the given multiple choice answers are known as closed format or closed-ended questions. There is no fixed limit as to how many multiple choices should be given; the number can be even or odd. One of the main advantages of including closed format questions in your questionnaire design is the ease at performing preliminary analysis. These questions are ideal for calculating statistical data and percentages, as the answers set is known. Closed ended questions can also be asked to different groups at different intervals to efficiently track their opinion about a product/ service/ company over time. Example - which are the gadgets that you cannot live without? (i) Cell Phone (ii) Laptop (iii) iPOD (iv) Digital Camera. Closed questions invite a short focused answer- answers to closed questions can often (but not always) be either right or wrong. Closed questions are usually easy to answer - as the choice of answer is limited - they can be effectively used early in conversations to encourage participation and can be very useful in fact-finding scenarios such as research. Closed questions are used to force a brief, often one-word answer. Closed questions can simply require a 'Yes' or 'No' answer, for example - *Do you smoke? Did you feed the cat? Would you like a cup of tea?* Closed questions can require that a choice is made from a list of possible options, for example - *Would you like beef, chicken or the vegetarian option? Did you travel by train or car today?* Closed questions can be asked to identify a certain piece of information, again with a limited set of answers, for example - *What is your name? What time does the supermarket open? Where did you go to University?*

Closed-ended questions can be further classified into 7 types. Following is a list of 7 types of closed-ended questions that can be a part of your questionnaire design-

A. **Leading Questions:** Questions that force your audience for a particular type of answer are known as leading questions. In a leading question, all the answers would be equally likely. An example of a leading question would be a question with choices such as, fair, good, great, poor, superb, excellent etc. These questions are meant to get an opinion from the audience in limited words. Example - How would you rate the products of Unilever? (1) Fair (2) Good (3) Excellent (4) Superb.

B. **Importance Questions:** In importance questions, the respondents are usually asked to rate the importance of a particular issue, on a rating scale of 1 to 5. These questions can help you understand things that hold significance to your respondents and allow you make business critical decisions. For example, cost-effective services are - (1) Extremely Important (2) Very Important (3) Somewhat Important (4) Not Very Important (5) Not at all Important.

C. **Likert Questions:** Likert questions can help you ascertain how strongly your respondents agree to a particular statement. Such types of questions also help you assess how your customers feel towards a certain issue, product or service. For example, unilever's products have to improve on quality - (1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Neither Agree or Disagree (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree.

D. **Dichotomous Questions:** These are simple questions that ask respondents to answer in a yes or no. One major drawback with dichotomous questions is that it cannot analyze the answers between yes and no, there is no scope for a middle perspective. For example, do you like the products of Unilever? (a) Yes (b) No.

E. **Bipolar Questions:** Bipolar questions are the ones having two extreme answers written at the opposite ends of the scale. The respondents are asked to mark their responses between those two. For example, how would you describe the services of Unilever?

Efficient	.....	.....	..... <sup>x</sup> .....	.....	.....	.....	Inefficient
Fast	.....	.....	..... <sup>x</sup> .....	.....	.....	.....	Slow
Reliable	.....	..... <sup>x</sup> .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	Unreliable

F. **Rating Scale Questions:** In rating scale questions, the respondents are asked to rate a particular issue on a scale that ranges between poor to good. Rating scale questions usually have an even number of choices, so that respondents are not given the choice of selecting a middle option. For example, how would you rate the services of Unilever? (1) Good (2) Fair (3) Poor (4) Very Poor.

G. **Buying Propensity Questions:** Buying propensity questions try to assess the future intentions of customers and determine respondent's buying intention. These questions ask respondents if they want to buy a particular product, what requirements they want to be addressed, and whether they would buy such a product in future. For example, if mobile phones had an in-built mp3 player, would you prefer to buy it? (1) Definitely (2) Probably (3) Probably Not (4) Not Sure (5) Definitely Not.

Questionnaires include open-ended questions and close-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow the respondent considerable freedom in answering. However, questions are answered in details. Close-ended questions have to be answered by the respondent by choosing an answer from the set of answers given under a question just by ticking. Other types of Questionnaire used by social scientists and psychologists are -

*Structured Questionnaire:* It include definite, concrete and pre-obtained questions which were prepared in advance.

*Unstructured Questionnaire:* Designed to obtained view points, opinions, attitudes and to show relationships and inter-connections between data which might escape notice under more mechanical types of interrogations. Used in studies related to the group of families or those relating to the personal experiences, beliefs etc.

*Pictorial Questionnaire:* It is used to promote interest in answering after seeing the pictures on a particular theme. Used in studies related to the social attitudes and the prejudices in the children.

*Socratic Questions:* Due to the rapid addition of new information and the advancement of science and technology that occur almost daily, an engineer must constantly expand his or her horizons beyond simple gathering information and relying on the basic engineering principles. A number of homework problems have been included that are designed to enhance critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is the process we use to reflect on, access and judge the assumptions underlying our own and others ideas and actions.

Socratic questioning is at the heart of critical thinking and a number of homework problems draw from R.W. Paul's six types of Socratic questions-

1. Questions for clarification	Why do you say that? How does this relate to our discussion?
2. Questions that probe assumptions	What could we assume instead? How can you verify or disapprove that assumption?
3. Questions that probe reasons and evidence	What would be an example? What is....analogous to? What do you think causes to happen...? Why?
4. Questions about	What would be an alternative?

Viewpoints and Perspectives	What is another way to look at it? Would you explain why it is necessary or beneficial, and who benefits? Why is the best? What are the strengths and weaknesses of...? How are...and ...similar? What is a counterargument for...?
5. Questions that probe implications and consequences	What generalizations can you make? What are the consequences of that assumption? What are you implying? How does...affect...? How does...tie in with what we learned before?
6. Questions about the question	What was the point of this question? Why do you think I asked this question? What does...mean? How does...apply to everyday life?

There is something more important than knowing the questionnaire format and what type of questions to be asked in a questionnaire. It is understanding, what questions need to be avoided in a survey or poll. Take care to avoid following type of questions when preparing a questionnaire -

**Embarrassing Questions:** Questions that ask respondents details about their personal and private matters are embarrassing questions. Such types of questions are better to be avoided as you risk losing trust of your respondents. Your respondents might also feel uncomfortable to answer such questions and might refuse to answer your questionnaire altogether.

**Positive/ Negative Connotation Questions:** Since most verbs, adjectives and nouns in the English language have either a positive or negative connotations, questions are bound to be taken as either positive or negative. While defining a question, strong negative or positive overtones must be avoided. You will get different data depending on the positive or negative connotation of your question. Ideal questions should have neutral or subtle overtones.

**Hypothetical Questions:** Hypothetical questions are based on speculation and fantasy. An example of a hypothetical question would be 'If you were the CEO of an ABC organization what would be the changes that you would bring?' Questions such as these, force respondents to give their ideas on a particular subject, and generally the data collected through such questions are inconsistent and unclear. Hypothetical questions should be avoided in questionnaires.

## 8.5 DEVELOPMENT OF A QUESTIONNAIRE

There are nine steps involved in the development of a questionnaire-

1. Decide the information required.
2. Define the target respondents.
3. Choose the method(s) of reaching your target respondents.
4. Decide on question content.
5. Develop the question wording.
6. Put questions into a meaningful order and format.
7. Check the length of the questionnaire.
8. Pre-test the questionnaire.
9. Develop the final survey form.

**Deciding on the Information Required:** The first step is to decide what are the things one needs to know from the respondent in order to meet the survey's objectives? One may already have an idea about the kind of information to be collected, but additional help can be obtained from secondary data, previous rapid rural appraisals and exploratory research. In respect of secondary data, the researcher should be aware of what work has been done on the same or similar problems in the past, what factors have not yet been examined, and how the present survey questionnaire can build on what has already been discovered. Further, a small number of preliminary informal interviews with target respondents will give a glimpse of reality that may help clarify ideas about what information is required.

**Define the Target Respondents:** At the outset, the researcher must define the population about which s/he wishes to generalize from the sample data to be collected. For example, in marketing research, researchers often have to decide whether they should cover only existing users of the generic product type or whether to also include non-users. Secondly, researchers have to draw up a sampling frame. Thirdly, in designing the questionnaire we must take into account factors such as the age, education, etc. of the target respondents.

**Choose the Method(s) of Reaching Target Respondents:** It may seem strange to be suggesting that the method of reaching the intended respondents should constitute part of the questionnaire design process. However, a moment's reflection is sufficient to conclude that the method of contact will influence not only the questions the researcher is able to ask but the phrasing of those questions. The main methods available in survey research are - •personal interviews •group or focus interviews •mailed questionnaires and •telephone interviews. Within this region the first two mentioned are used much more extensively than the second pair. However, each has its advantages and disadvantages. A general rule is that the more sensitive or personal the information, the more personal the form of data collection should be.

**Decide on Question Content:** Researchers must always be prepared to ask, 'Is this question really needed?' No question should be included unless the data it gives rise to is directly of use in testing one or more of the hypotheses established during the research design. There are only two occasions when seemingly redundant questions might be included - (a) Opening questions that are easy to answer and which are not perceived as being threatening and/or are perceived as being interesting, can greatly assist in gaining the respondent's involvement in the survey and help to establish a rapport. (b) Dummy questions can disguise the purpose of the survey and/or the sponsorship of a study. For example, if a manufacturer wanted to find out whether its distributors were giving the consumers or end-users of its products a reasonable level of service, the researcher would want to disguise the fact that the distributors' service level was being investigated. If s/he did not, then rumours would abound that there was something wrong with the distributor.

**Develop the Question Wording:** Survey questions can be classified into different forms, i.e. closed, open-ended, open response-option questions, etc. Clearly there are going to be situations in which a questionnaire will need to incorporate all the forms of question, because some forms are more appropriate for seeking particular forms of response. In instances where it is felt the respondent needs assistance to articulate answers or provide answers on a preferred dimension determined by the researcher, then closed questions should be used. Open-ended questions should be used where there are likely to be a very large number of possible different responses (e.g. farm size), where one is seeking a response described in the respondent's own words, and when one is unsure about the possible answer options. The mixed type of question would be advantageous in most instances where most potential response-options are known; where unprompted and prompted responses are valuable,

and where the survey needs to allow for unanticipated responses. It is good practice to keep questions as simple as possible. Researchers must be sensitive to the fact that some of the people s/he will be interviewing do not have a high level of education. Sometimes s/he will have no idea how well or badly educated the respondents are until s/he gets into the field. In the same way, researchers should strive to avoid long questions. The careless design of questions can result in the inclusion of two items in one question. For example, 'Do you like the speed and reliability of your tractor?' The respondent is given the opportunity to answer only 'yes' or 'no', whereas he might like the speed, but not the reliability, or vice versa. Thus it is difficult for the respondent to answer and equally difficult for the researcher to interpret the response. The use of ambiguous words should also be avoided. For example, 'Do you regularly service your tractor?' The respondents' understanding and interpretation of the term 'regularly' will differ. Some may consider that regularly means once a week, others may think once a year is regular. The researcher must be clearly aware of the various customs, morals and traditions in the community being studied. In many communities there can be a great reluctance to discuss certain questions with interviewers/strangers. Although the degree to which certain topics are taboo varies from area to area, such subjects as level of education, income and religious issues may be embarrassing and respondents may refuse to answer. The respondent should be asked only for such data as s/he is likely to be able to clearly remember. One has to bear in mind that not everyone has a good memory, so questions such as 'Four years ago was there a shortage of labor?' should be avoided.

Putting Questions into a Meaningful Order and Format: The order and format can be as -

- A. *Opening questions:* Opening questions should be easy to answer and not in any way threatening to the respondents. The first question is crucial because it is the respondent's first exposure to the interview and sets the tone for the nature of the task to be performed. If they find the first question difficult to understand, or beyond their knowledge and experience, or embarrassing in some way, they are likely to break off immediately. If, on the other hand, they find the opening question easy and pleasant to answer, they are encouraged to continue.
- B. *Question flow:* Questions should flow in some kind of psychological order, so that one leads easily and naturally to the next. Questions on one subject, or one particular aspect of a subject, should be grouped together. Respondents may feel it disconcerting to keep shifting from one topic to another, or to be asked to return to some subject they thought they gave their opinions about earlier.
- C. *Question variety:* Respondents become bored quickly and restless when asked similar questions for half an hour or so. It usually improves response, therefore, to vary the respondent's task from time to time. An open-ended question here and there (even if it is not analyzed) may provide much-needed relief from a long series of questions in which respondents have been forced to limit their replies to pre-coded categories. Questions involving showing cards/pictures to respondents can help vary the pace and increase interest.
- D. *Closing questions:* It is natural for a respondent to become increasingly indifferent to the questionnaire as it nears the end. Because of impatience or fatigue, s/he may give careless answers to the later questions. Those questions, therefore, that are of special importance should, if possible, be included in the earlier part of the questionnaire. Potentially sensitive questions should be left to the end, to avoid respondents cutting off the interview before important information is collected.

In developing the questionnaire the researcher should pay particular attention to the presentation and layout of the interview form itself. The interviewer's task needs to be made as straight-forward



as possible. Questions should be clearly worded and response options clearly identified. Prescribed definitions and explanations should be provided. This ensures that the questions are handled consistently by all interviewers and that during the interview process the interviewer can answer/clarify respondents' queries. Ample writing space should be allowed to record open-ended answers, and to cater for differences in handwriting between interviewers.

**Physical Appearance of the Questionnaire:** The physical appearance of a questionnaire can have a significant effect upon both the quantity and quality of data obtained. The quantity of data is a function of the response rate. Ill-designed questionnaires can give an impression of complexity, medium and too big a time commitment. Data quality can also be affected by the physical appearance of the questionnaire with unnecessarily confusing layouts making it more difficult for interviewers, or respondents in the case of self-completion questionnaires, to complete this task accurately. Attention to just a few basic details can have a disproportionately advantageous impact on the data obtained through a questionnaire.

Use of booklets	The use of booklets, in the place of loose or stapled sheets of paper make it easier for interviewer or respondent to progress through the document. Moreover, fewer pages tend to get lost.
Simple, clear formats	The clarity of questionnaire presentation can also help to improve the ease with which interviewers or respondents are able to complete a questionnaire.
Creative use of space and typeface	To reduce the number of pages of a questionnaire there is a tendency to put too much information on a page. This is counter-productive since it gives the questionnaire the appearance of being complicated. Questionnaires that make use of blank space appear easier to use, enjoy higher response rates and contain fewer errors when completed.
Use of color coding	Color coding can help in the administration of questionnaires. It is often the case that several types of respondents are included within a single survey (e.g. wholesalers and retailers). Printing the questionnaires on two different colors of paper can make the handling easier.
Interviewer instructions	Interviewer instructions should be placed alongside the questions to which they pertain. Instructions on where the interviewers should probe for more information or how replies should be recorded are placed after the question.

In general it is best for a questionnaire to be as short as possible. A long questionnaire leads to a long interview and this is open to the dangers of boredom on the part of the respondent (and poorly considered, hurried answers), interruptions by third parties and greater costs in terms of interviewing time and resources. In a rural situation an interview should not last longer than 30-45 minutes.

**Piloting the Questionnaires:** Even after the researcher has proceeded along the lines suggested, the draft questionnaire is a product evolved by one or two minds only. Until it has actually been used in interviews and with respondents, it is impossible to say whether it is going to achieve the desired results. For this reason it is necessary to pre-test the questionnaire before it is used in a full-scale survey, to identify any mistakes that need correcting. The purpose of pre-testing the questionnaire is to determine - Whether...

- ✓ questions as they are worded will achieve the desired results;
- ✓ questions have been placed in the best order;
- ✓ questions are understood by all classes of respondent;
- ✓ additional or specifying questions are needed or whether some questions should be eliminated; and
- ✓ instructions to interviewers are adequate.

Usually a small number of respondents are selected for the pre-test. The respondents selected for the pilot survey should be broadly representative of the type of respondent to be interviewed in the main survey.



**Final Form of the Questions:** If the questionnaire has been subjected to a thorough pilot test, the final form of the questions and questionnaire will have evolved into its final form. All that remains to be done is the mechanical process of laying out and setting up the questionnaire in its final form. This will involve grouping and sequencing questions into an appropriate order, numbering questions, and inserting interviewer instructions.

Here are some tips to follow when you want to know how to develop a questionnaire for research.

*Figure out what information you are trying to gather from this survey.* What is your main objective in doing the questionnaire? What information do you need from the respondents in order to meet your objectives? Think of questions that will address your objectives and get answers for your questions. You should also make sure that your questions are not redundant or not specific to your topic. You should not include any questions that do not gather information that is directly useful in your research.

*Write an introduction for your questionnaire.* This should explain a little about your questionnaire: why are you doing it and what your goal is. The introduction should be kept brief but also engage your target audience. Think about how long their attention span probably is, and try to coordinate the questionnaire based on that estimate.

*Use closed questions for questionnaire.* A closed question is one that can be answered with a word or a phrase. This makes it easy for the respondent to give their answer without having to think of an articulate way to word it. Closed questions also benefit you because it makes it easier to classify and group answers together.

*Order your questions in a way that is meaningful and easy to follow.* Start with questions that are easy to understand and easy to answer. Opening with harder questions is off-putting and may scare your respondents off before they complete your entire survey. Easy questions help encourage your participants to want to finish answering the rest of the questions. The rest of the questions should flow in some sort of order that sounds natural and does not skip around too much. Group like topics together rather than skipping around from topic to topic.

*Put the more important questions at the beginning of your questionnaire.* Often, participants can lose interest by the end, especially if the survey is rather lengthy. If there are any questions that are of more importance and that you want your respondents to focus on, place them towards the beginning of your questionnaire.

*Add a little variety to your questions.* While closed questions are best for ease of answering and analyzing purposes, adding in a couple of open ended questions helps keep respondents from becoming bored. Open ended questions require respondents to write out their answers and include some detail.

*Decide what methods you will use to reach your target audience.* If you are not seeking a particular audience, you can gather information using your questionnaire through interviews, focus groups, mailing your questionnaires or telephone interviews. If your target audience is a specific group, you will want to use methods to reach those specific people. For example, if you are looking for information from college students, you should do your survey at local colleges.

#### How to Write a Questionnaire

Students are often very disappointed when the questionnaires or surveys they send out as part of their course have a very low response rate, and this may even affect the validity of their research. It is very important, therefore, that questionnaires be well prepared and well constructed in order to minimize non-response.

#### General Considerations -

*Keep the questionnaire as short as possible:* Most people are busy. Certain companies and organizations may also receive

many other similar questionnaires and other requests from students around the country, or even internationally. If your questionnaire is long and complicated, it will greatly lessen the chances of receiving a response. Just stick to the essential or very useful information needed; discard any questions which relate to supplementary, secondary or unnecessary data. This means preparing well, and making sure that you know exactly what your aims are. Are you trying to identify attitudes, needs, behavior or what?

*Target the questionnaire carefully:* You must make sure that your questionnaire is completely relevant to the person you're asking to complete it. It may be a good idea to send a preliminary email to ask if it would be OK to send the questionnaire, and if in fact it would be relevant to the person. In addition, try to target people and organizations who you think are less likely to be bombarded by similar requests. Some sort of personal contact or relationship would of course be ideal; a phone call or even an email in advance may increase the chances of a response. Don't just send your questionnaire to a general address.

*Consider the question of anonymity:* If your questionnaire contains sensitive or personal questions, you need to convince potential respondents that their answers will be confidential. If not, they will not respond.

*Maybe offer something in return:* Commercial questionnaires try to tempt people into replying by offering the chance to win holidays or money. You obviously can't do this, but some sort of incentive is important to motivate people into responding. You could maybe offer to send the respondent a copy of the survey results, or make it clear in the introduction just how worthwhile your project is and that the respondent may benefit from it at some stage. It might just persuade them to answer. Don't make people pay for stamps or phone calls!

*Use follow-up reminders:* Your target respondent may have every intention of replying, but has got lots of other important things to do to, so a polite reminder (or two) may be necessary. This is probably best done by email or phone, and you might have more chance of a response on a Friday than a Monday. Remember, however, the question of anonymity: it may be necessary to use codes to be able to track who has replied or not, but you must make it clear that the link between codes and personal will not be used and will be destroyed.

#### Types of Questions

*Keep your language simple:* Phrase your questions in simple, unambiguous language, which will be instantly understood. Don't use any jargon or abbreviations which might be unknown to some of your target sample. Check over your grammar and spelling very carefully, and if necessary get someone else to do this as well. Mistakes look very unprofessional and give the impression that you are not very serious about what you're doing. If you couldn't be bothered, why should someone else be bothered to reply?

*Don't make it too formal or informal:* It's not an official document; just use 'standard', neutral vocabulary and grammar, being careful, however, not to use colloquial language.

*Start with interesting questions:* Just as a good introduction to an essay will grab the attention of the reader, so interesting, relevant initial questions will immediately involve the respondent in the questionnaire, and make it more likely that they will continue on through the whole thing. Save the more complicated ones for later. You could begin with one or two non-specialized personal questions, or maybe phrase questions in the third person rather than the first. For example, 'How does your company feel about equal pay' rather than 'How do you feel about equal pay?'

*Avoid leading questions:* These are questions which presume a specific response. For example, 'Which train company do you use most often?' presumes that the respondent travels by train. If they don't, they can't answer.

*Limit, or avoid, the use of open-ended questions:* Open-ended questions require an original, personal response to a question. For example, 'What do you consider to be the most important qualities of a Personnel Officer?' Answers to such questions obviously take a lot more time than yes/no answers or rating scales. Definitely don't start with questions like this; if you want to include you or two, put them at the end. And don't leave too much space for the answer; if the respondent sees half a page of blank paper, they may feel that they have to fill it all, and consequently be discouraged from answering at all. Open-ended questions are also more difficult to analyze and categorize.

*Use simple rating scales or lists of choices:* If the respondent is faced with a long list of scales or choices, they may be put off. Maybe consider five as a maximum.

*Put your questions in logical order:* There should be a flow of questions; one question should logically follow the previous one. You could perhaps start with one or two general questions, and then become more specific.

#### Administering the Questionnaire

*Trial the questionnaire as much as possible:* Pre-testing, maybe with colleagues, is important to help you identify any problems with the format or wording of your questionnaire before you send out the final version. At this stage you can iron out any ambiguities, vagueness or inaccuracies, or add or delete questions.

*Clearly introduce the questionnaire:* Even if you have carefully selected your sample and maybe made initial contact with some or all of the potential respondents, it is still important to make it clear to the person opening the envelope or reading the email what it is all about. They need as much motivation as possible to spend their precious time filling in your questionnaire. So always include a short introduction which makes clear -

- the purpose of the questionnaire
- why it is important for you (and why it could be useful for the respondent)
- how long it should take to complete
- what will happen to the results
- complete contact details
- final date for reply.

If you're sending it by email, make sure the message header makes clear what it is; you don't want it deleted before you start.

## 8.6 PREPARING AND ADMINISTERING QUESTIONNAIRE

Main modes of questionnaire administration are -

- ❖ Face-to-face questionnaire administration, where an interviewer presents the items orally.
- ❖ Paper-and-pencil questionnaire administration, where the items are presented on paper.
- ❖ Computerized questionnaire administration, where the items are presented on the computer.
- ❖ Adaptive computerized questionnaire administration, where a selection of items is presented on the computer, and based on the answers on those items, the computer selects following items optimized for the testee's estimated ability or trait.

We can prepare and administer questionnaire in the following ways -

- Get all the help that you can in planning and constructing your questionnaire. Study other questionnaire and submit your items for criticism to other member of your class or your faculty, especially to those who have had experience in questionnaire construction.
- Try out your questionnaire on a few friends and questionnaires when you do this personally, you may find that a number of your items are ambiguous.
- Choose respondents carefully. It is an important that questionnaire be sent only to those who possess the desired information or those who are likely to be sufficiently interested to respond conscientiously and objectively. A preliminary card, asking whether or not the individual would be willing to participate in the proposed study, is recommended by research authorities.

In a study on questionnaire returns discovered that a greater proportions of returns was obtained when the original request was sent to the administrative head of an organization, rather than directly to the person who had the desired information. It is possible then when a superior officer turns over a questionnaire to a staff member to fill out, there is implied some feeling of obligation.

- If schedules or questionnaires are planned for use in a public school, asking for the responses of teachers or pupils, it is essential that approval of the project be secured from the principal, who may, then, wish to secure approval from the superintendents of schools.
- If the desired information is delicate or intimate in nature, consider the possibility of proving for anonymous responses. The anonymous instrument is most likely to produce objective responses. There are occasions, however, for purposes of classification, when the identity of the respondent is necessary. If a signature is needed it is essential to convince the respondent that his/ her responses will be held in strict confidence, and that his/ her answer will in no way jeopardize the status and security of his/ her position.
- Try to get the aid of sponsorship. Recipients are more likely to answer if a person, organization, or institution for prestige has endorsed the project.
- Be sure to include a courteous, carefully constructed cover letter to explain the purpose of the study. The letter should promise some sort of inducement to the respondent for compliance with the request.

The cover letter should assure the respondent that delicate information will be held in strict confidence. The explanation sponsorship might well be mentioned, of course, a stamped addressed return envelope should be included. To omit this courtesy would be practically to guarantee that many of the questionnaires would go into the waste paper basket. It has been suggested that two copies of the questionnaires be sent, one to be returned when completed and the other for respondent's own life.

- Recipients are often slow to return completed questionnaire; to increase the number of returns, a vigorous follow up procedure may be necessary. A courteous postcard reminding the recipient that the completed questionnaire has not been received will bring in some additional responses. This reminder will be effective with those who have just put in the follow up process may involve a personal letter or reminder. In extreme cases a telegram, phone call, or personal visit may bring additional responses.

It is difficult to estimate, in the abstract, what percentage of questionnaire responses is to be considered adequate or satisfactory. The importance of the project, the quality of questionnaire, the case used in selecting recipients, the time of year, and many other factors may be significant in determining the proportion of responses. Needless to say, the smaller the percentage of responses, the smaller the degree of confidence one may place in the adequacy of the data collected. However, objectivity of reporting requires that the proportion of responses received should always be included in the research report.

## 8.7 QUESTIONNAIRE WORDING

The wording of a question is extremely important. Many investigators have confirmed that slight changes in the way questions are worded can have a significant impact on how people respond. Several authors have reported that minor changes in question wording can produce more than a 25 percent difference in people's opinions. Several investigators have looked at the effects of modifying adjectives and adverbs. Words like *usually*, *often*, *sometimes*, *occasionally*, *seldom*, and *rarely* are 'commonly' used in questionnaires, although it is clear that they do not mean the same thing to all people. Some adjectives have high variability and others have low variability. The following adjectives have highly variable meanings and should be avoided in surveys - *a clear mandate*, *most*, *numerous*, *a substantial majority*, *a minority of*, *a large proportion of*, *a significant number of*, *many*, *a considerable number of*, and *several*. Other adjectives produce less variability and generally have more shared meaning. These are - *lots*, *almost all*, *virtually all*, *nearly all*, *a majority of*, *a consensus of*, *a small number of*, *not very many of*, *almost none*, *hardly any*, *a couple*, and *a few*.

### Common Wording Problems When Writing Questionnaires

*Ensure the question fits the information needs of the survey:* The first step in developing a questionnaire is defining the survey objectives. From these survey objectives, topic specifications are developed to clarify your information needs of the survey. Information needs are developed through conversations between subject matter areas and questionnaire designers. When developing a question, the questionnaire designer should always refer back to the documented topic specifications to ensure that questions fit the information needs required by the subject matter area.

*Ensure the question is specific:* Each question needs to be as specific as possible so that respondents understand exactly what is being asked of them. Avoid broad questions. Ensure the questionnaire clearly states the criteria with which the respondent should answer and who the

respondent is reporting for. Questions should clearly state what type of answer is appropriate. Ambiguous questions that have more than one meaning are open to different interpretations by respondents. To minimize this, avoid using terms that can be interpreted in several ways. For instance, the word 'dinner' may mean a lunchtime meal to some respondents, or an evening meal to others. Use specific terms that should be interpreted by the general public in the same way. Write questions as complete sentences or statements that can be understood in their own right. Complete sentences help respondents determine what type of information is required without having to refer to other sources of information, such as instructions or response options.

*Keep wording short and simple:* Each question needs to be as simple as possible. Questions should be easy to understand and easy to answer. Questions that are complicated and hard to understand may lead respondents to guess their answers, or refuse to answer altogether. Making the response process clearer increases the likelihood of getting more accurate data. It is generally best to keep questions short. Respondents are more likely to be confused by long and complicated sentences. Occasionally, longer questions or sentences are better, especially in interviewer-administered and complex questionnaires, where the respondent may need more time to absorb the information or further explanation. Avoid the use of jargon and slang. However, question development should take into account the characteristics of the respondent population. Language should be appropriate for that population. If the survey is of a specialized group, for example, doctors or computer experts, then it may be appropriate to use the language or jargon of that group. But these questions will need to be reworded if this same information is required from the general public. Avoid using overly educated and technical terms. If these kinds of terms must be used, respondents should be given additional definitions.

*Use terms consistently throughout the questionnaire:* Ensure the same word is always used to convey identical meaning. Using more than one term to refer to the same thing can confuse respondents and should be avoided. For example, avoid referring to the 'business' in one question, the 'company' in another, and the 'organization' in a third question.

*Provide reference periods:* A reference period is a period of time that gives respondents the context on which to base their answer. Providing reference periods ensures data comparability because every respondent provides data for the same period of time. However, when collecting snapshot data, normally it is not necessary to use a reference period. Keep reference periods realistic. The further respondents are asked to think back, the harder it will be for them to accurately remember or retrieve data from their records. In social surveys, make the reference period consistent with the significance of an event. The more routine and regular the event, the shorter the reference period should be. Where events are salient and more memorable, longer reference periods are satisfactory. Typically, reference periods for social surveys include the last 12 months and the last four weeks. For example, if asking about going on holiday, you would ask over a 12-month period. If you asked a respondent whether they have been to a cafe, you would ask for a four-week period. However, reference periods may be shorter. For business respondents, choose reference periods that are compatible with the record-keeping practices of the businesses in the survey population. Often in business surveys the reference period is one year, but respondents are asked to define their financial year to make it easier for them to complete the questionnaire. Where possible put the reference period at the beginning of the question, rather than at the end to increase the chance of the respondent reading it. In some instances it may not be appropriate for a reference period to be stated in each question, especially if the period of interest is the same throughout a questionnaire. As a general rule, a reference period should be referred to at least



once every 4-6 questions to aid the respondent's memory. In questionnaires that ask about a number of different periods, reference periods will have to be re-stated much more frequently. Be aware of the risk in using different reference periods within a questionnaire. Try and make the flow of topics and reference periods logical for respondents, to reduce the chance that respondents will answer for the wrong period.

*Make sure questions are inclusive of all respondents:* Do not assume that questions will be relevant to all respondents. If there are questions which respondents cannot answer, they can get frustrated, and this could lead to them giving up on the questionnaire and reducing their effort. Using routing will mean that this does not occur. A filter question may need to be asked first to ensure that the respondent is going to answer a question relevant to their situation, or whether they need to be routed to the next applicable question. Another way to avoid this is to ensure that a response category in such a question provides an appropriate response such as none of these. When writing questions, be sure that respondents are able to provide the required information.

*Ensure examples (where necessary) are used appropriately:* Be careful when using examples within a question or response option. Examples are useful in some situations as they help clarify context. Examples should be as broad as possible within the context of the question. Specific examples can constrain respondents to thinking only about what is in the example, and restrict their responses. To keep responses broad, give one or two examples to provide context, then include reference to the possibility of other things to think about.

*Avoid double-barreled questions:* Double-barreled questions are those that ask two or more questions in the one question. They are hard to understand and should be avoided. Respondents could find these questions hard to answer, or answer them incorrectly, especially if they have a different answer for each part. This means that data collected from double-barreled questions cannot be reliably analyzed as it is impossible to know whether the answers refer to both parts of the question, or only to one part. Ensure that each question is only about one topic. Do not include questions that require a single response when two would be more appropriate. Watch for the use of 'and' or 'or' in the question wording. Often these words indicate that the question is asking about more than one topic.

*Avoid leading and loaded questions:* A leading question is one that suggests a particular response is required or provides no alternative for a different response. Loaded words or questions are 'emotionally colored' and can suggest a feeling of approval or disapproval. Leading and loaded questions influence respondents to answer in a particular way, often responding differently than they would if the question was worded neutrally. Data collected from these types of questions will be biased and present a distorted view of those surveyed. Use neutral wording. The use of emotive words and phrases may influence respondents to answer in a particular way. Avoid wording that leads respondents by suggesting the position or stance of an authority. Respondents may feel unwilling to show a different opinion to people in authority. Be aware that some topics are more likely to be influenced by social desirability, which is the tendency for some respondents to provide answers they think make them look intelligent or are in accord with social norms. Sensitive questions should only be asked when there is a high-priority information need as captured in the topic specifications. The information need must be clearly justified. Sensitive questions pose a risk to survey response. They can reduce response rates or encourage respondents to give false or inaccurate information, affecting data quality. Different questions will be sensitive to different respondents for different reasons. Sensitive questions typically fall into three broad categories. Questions that ask for information that - (a) the respondent considers private and personal such as income; (b) the



respondent considers intrusive and causes them embarrassment such as sexual behavior; and (c) presents the respondent in a socially undesirable way and could be incriminating such as drug taking. When there is a high-priority information need to ask sensitive questions, they should be designed with care and phrased in a non judgmental way. Avoid the use of words that respondents may find offensive or blaming.

*Define abbreviations and acronyms:* Questions are more likely to be understood if they contain complete words, rather than acronyms or abbreviations. Any acronym that must be used should always be defined when it first appears. This will ensure that respondents clearly understand the meaning of the acronym throughout the remainder of the questionnaire. Spell out abbreviations because the meaning of an abbreviation can be interpreted in different ways by respondents. One term to avoid completely is the use of 'etc' in a question. This term only leaves respondents guessing as to what else could be included.

*Avoid questions which contain negatives:* It is important to avoid asking respondents to say 'no' in order to mean yes. Cognitively it is much easier for respondents to answer a question worded in the positive, rather than the negative. When people are asked negative questions they are much slower in responding because it is difficult to comprehend and process. The slower response is caused by people having to work harder for their answers. Negative questions impose unnecessary cognitive burden and are more likely to elicit inaccurate data. An example of a negative question is 'Do you think that tertiary students shouldn't have to pay course fees?' Double negative questions include two negative aspects within a question, such as being 'against' an activity 'not' happening. Questions containing double negatives are often confusing for respondents who, without realizing it, may give an answer that contradicts their beliefs.

## References

- Kabir, S.M.S.** (2016). *Basic Guidelines for Research: An Introductory Approach for All Disciplines*. Book Zone Publication, ISBN: 978-984-33-9565-8, Chittagong-4203.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** (2017). *Essentials of Counseling*. Abosar Prokashana Sangstha, ISBN: 978-984-8798-22-5, Banglabazar, Dhaka-1100.
- Kabir, S.M.S.,** Mostafa, M.R., Chowdhury, A.H., & Salim, M.A.A. (2016). *Bangladesher Samajtattwa (Sociology of Bangladesh)*. Protik Publisher, ISBN: 978-984-8794-69-2, Dhaka-1100.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** (2018). Psychological health challenges of the hill-tracts region for climate change in Bangladesh. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry, Elsevier*, 34, 74–77.
- Kabir, S.M.S.,** Aziz, M.A., & Jahan, A.K.M.S. (2018). Women Empowerment and Governance in Bangladesh. *ANTYAJAA: Indian journal of Women and Social Change*, SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd, 3(1), 1-12.
- Alam, S.S. & **Kabir, S.M.S.** (2015). Classroom Management in Secondary Level: Bangladesh Context. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 5(8), 1-4, ISSN

2250-3153, [www.ijssrp.org](http://www.ijssrp.org).

- Alam, S.S., **Kabir, S.M.S.**, & Aktar, R. (2015). General Observation, Cognition, Emotion, Social, Communication, Sensory Deficiency of Autistic Children. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 6(7), 663-666, ISSN-p-2229-5356,e-2321-3698.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** (2013). Positive Attitude Can Change Life. *Journal of Chittagong University Teachers' Association*, 7, 55-63.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** & Mahtab, N. (2013). Gender, Poverty and Governance Nexus: Challenges and Strategies in Bangladesh. *Empowerment a Journal of Women for Women*, Vol. 20, 1-12.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** & Jahan, A.K.M.S. (2013). Household Decision Making Process of Rural Women in Bangladesh. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, ISSN: 2279-0845, Vol,10, Issue 6 (May. - Jun. 2013), 69-78. ISSN (Online): 2279-0837.
- Jahan, A.K.M.S., Mannan, S.M., & **Kabir, S.M.S.** (2013). Designing a Plan for Resource Sharing among the Selected Special Libraries in Bangladesh, *International Journal of Library Science and Research (IJLSR)*, ISSN 2250-2351, Vol. 3, Issue 3, Aug 2013, 1-20, ISSN: 2321-0079.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** & Jahan, I. (2009). Anxiety Level between Mothers of Premature Born Babies and Those of Normal Born Babies. *The Chittagong University Journal of Biological Science*, 4(1&2), 131-140.
- Kabir, S.M.S.**, Amanullah, A.S.M., & Karim, S.F. (2008). Self-esteem and Life Satisfaction of Public and Private Bank Managers. *The Dhaka University Journal of Psychology*, 32, 9-20.
- Kabir, S.M.S.**, Amanullah, A.S.M., Karim, S.F., & Shafiqul, I. (2008). Mental Health and Self-esteem: Public Vs. Private University Students in Bangladesh. *Journal of Business and Technology*, 3, 96-108.
- Kabir, S.M.S.**, Shahid, S.F.B., & Karim, S.F. (2007). Personality between Housewives and Working Women in Bangladesh. *Dhaka University Journal of Psychology*, 31, 73-84.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** & Karim, S.F. (2005). Influence of Type of Bank and Sex on Self-esteem, Life Satisfaction and Job Satisfaction. *Dhaka University Journal of Psychology*, 29, 41-52.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** & Rashid, U.K. (2017). Interpersonal Values, Inferiority Complex, and Psychological Well-Being of Teenage Students. *Jagannath University Journal of Life and Earth Sciences*, 3(1&2), 127-135.
-