

## **Methods of Social Research**

The research methods can be grouped as, survey method, case study method, library research, historical method and experimental method.

### **Survey Method**

The word survey has been derived from two Latin words, “Sur” which means over and “veir” which means looking. By combining the two words we get “surveir” which means looking over. According to the research dictionary **“social survey is a scientific method to study the current social problems”**.

Survey research does not belong to any one field and it can be employed by almost any discipline. A survey of the community means the scientific study of its conditions and needs for the purpose of presenting a constructive program of social uplift and well being. It is a problem solving and fact finding process. Survey research collects data or information from a large group of subjects. Surveys may include polls, mailed questionnaires, telephone interviews or face to face interviews. Social survey-planners study social life intensively and are concerned with human welfare. The most important characteristics of survey method are uniform collection of data and its use to establish quantitative relationships that enables the researcher to generalize for a known population. To achieve this end, a sample of individuals is systematically selected and questioned and classified in order to make quantitative comparisons.

### **Aims and Objectives of Survey**

- Identification of social problem
- Eradication and solution of identified problems
- Arousing public opinion for the solution of these problems i-e to find out the remedial measures with the consultation of the public. This is the best way of bringing the people in contact with the process.
- A survey avoids overlapping and duplication
- They reveal gap and deficiencies in the existing social services either by the analysis of social problems or by social services

### **Subject Matter of the Survey**

What is to be studied in social survey? The main four aspects are taken into consideration:

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- **Demographic Aspects**

The surveys are designed to study the whole population. It is a larger scale research.e.g. to find out the total population of a particular area, the total number of deaths, births, age, sex, occupation, socio-economic and other characteristics of the population.

- **Environmental Aspects**

Factors regarding environmental variables are collected for example, surveying the housing condition, communication facilities, transportation facilities, educational institution, post-offices, hospitals etc.

- **Behavioural**

Many survey questions relate to people's actions or behavioural in various social areas. Information dealing with the action or behaviour of respondents in economic and social fields is collected. For example, what the people do? How people behave in different situations? How they make use of their leisure time?

- **Opinion and Attitude**

Some survey questions concern people's belief, opinions, attitudes or expectations. This is the general psychological area of respondent's values and attitude; i-e public opinion about a particular problem-situation is considered e.g conducting a survey about public opinion at election.

### **Steps of Survey**

A survey contains the following steps:

- 1) General objective
- 2) Specific objective
- 3) Sample
- 4) Nature of the universe.
- 5) Size and Design of the sample
- 6) Construction of the questionnaire
- 7) Analysis Plan
- 8) Tabulation/Results

## 10) Reporting

In addition to the above steps, time schedule, organization and training of personnel for field work and budget allocation is also considered. A detail of some steps of survey is given below:

- **Designing the Questionnaire**

The first step is to rigorously define the objectives of the survey and devise appropriate questions. Questions need to be stated clearly. Good design of the survey instrument is important. This includes careful construction of the questions and appropriate consideration of attitude measurement scales.

- **Sampling**

The population to survey must be defined and the available information on the structure of the population or the target area must be gathered. The sample is a small representation of a whole or entire population. In order to be representative, it must be a large enough.

- **Pre-test**

A pre-test of the questionnaire, on a limited number of the respondents, is essential. It provides a critical view of the form and content of the questionnaire. The final version of the questionnaire will then be designed. This is particularly important in the case of self-completion surveys. Piloting the survey is useful in converting open into closed questions. For example, in the pre testing you asked where people learnt about the programme and they give five agencies in their open responses, these could form the bases of the option for a closed question.

- **Administration of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire may be self administered or administered by a member of the evaluation team. Self administered questionnaire is usually distributed by post or (more recently) e-mailed depending upon the situation.

- **Data Analysis**

The next stage is to codify and record the answers in computerized form or manual for subsequent analysis. The final stage is to conduct an analysis of the meaning of the results of the survey. Numerous specialized computer programmes can help to undertake this step. It is

important to ensure that final report provided sufficient details of the way in which the survey was performed.

### **Advantages**

- Easy to develop
- Surveys are relatively inexpensive
- Surveys are useful in describing the characteristics of a large population.
- They can be administered from remote locations using mail, E-mail and telephone. There is flexibility at the initial phase in deciding how the questions will be administered: as face to face interview, by telephone or oral survey etc.

### **Disadvantages**

- Respondents may not feel encouraged to provide accurate, honest answers.
- Surveys with closed-ended questions may have a lower validity rate than other question types.
- It may be hard for participants to recall information or to tell the truth about controversial questions.