

Primary and Secondary Research

When anybody decides to do a research project and he is able to sum up his research in one sentence, it is time to start planning his project. The first thing he needs to do is his background research. This will help him to become more familiar with his topic and introduce him to any other research which will be beneficial for him when he begins his own project.

There are two types of background research which are primary research and secondary research.

Primary research is the study of a subject through firsthand observation and investigation. This is what you will be doing with your main project, but you may also need to conduct primary research for your background work, especially if you are unable to find any past or existing published material about your topic. Primary research may come from your own observations or experience or from the information you gather personally from other people.

Advantages of primary data are as follows:

- The primary data are original and relevant to the topic of the research
- Primary data is that it can be collected from a number of ways like interviews, telephone surveys, focus groups etc.
- It can include a large population and wide geographical coverage
- It is current and it can better give a realistic view
- Reliability of primary data is very high

Following are the disadvantages of primary data:

- A lot of time and efforts are required for data collection
- It has design problems like how to design the surveys
- Some respondents do not give timely responses. Sometimes, the respondents may give fake, socially acceptable and sweet answers
- In some primary data collection methods there is no control over the data collection.
- Trained persons are required for data collection. Inexperienced person in data collection may give inadequate data of the research.

Secondary research involves the collection of information from studies that other researchers have made about a subject. The two easiest and most accessible places to find this information are libraries and the internet. However, you must remember that anybody can publish information over the internet and you should be aware that some of this information can be

misleading or incorrect. For most research, the easiest and quickest way to access secondary sources are libraries or the internet.

Advantages of secondary data are following:

- The primary advantage of secondary data is that it is cheaper and faster to access
- It provides access to the research work of the best scholars
- Secondary data gives a guideline to the researcher that in which direction he/she should go for the specific research.
- Secondary data save time, efforts and money

Following are the disadvantage of secondary data:

- The data collected by the third party may not be a reliable
- With the passage of time the data becomes old
- Secondary data can also raise issues of authenticity and copyright.

A combination of primary and secondary research gives proper coverage of the topic.

Primary Research	Secondary Research
Relevant people	Research books
Researcher observation	Research reports
Researcher's experience	Journal articles
Historical records/texts	Articles reproduced online
Personal documents (diaries, etc)	Scientific debates
Works of art	Critiques of literary works
Film/video	Critiques of art
Laboratory experiments	Analyses of historical events

I was interested in looking at absenteeism in schools. The idea came about from my own personal experience as a teacher. I had noticed some children who remained absent and I wanted to find out more. I thought that this investigation could help me to deal with children’ problem. So my own experience provided me with some initial data. Then I decided to go and have a discussion with some of my colleagues and see if they have noticed anything like me. It was really useful to do this because they helped me to think about other things which I had not even thought. One of them told me about a new research report, which had just come in the market and it was useful for me to read and increase my knowledge about the children’ absenteeism in schools. After reading that report, I noticed that there had been some research work on some components which I had in my mind but not so much on all aspects. That reading was very useful for me before I rushed into my research.