

Survey Method

Y The term survey is used for the technique of investigation by a 'direct-observation' of a phenomena or systematic gathering of data from population by applying personal contact and interviews when an in adequate information about certain problem is not available on records, files and other sources.

Y There are some writers who still believe that the term survey can be applicable only when a direct contact is made and does not include any study from the libraries or archives.

Definition

Y Some of the important definitions of social surveys are:

"Social survey is a fact finding study dealing chiefly with working class, poverty and with the nature and problems of community".

- A. F. Wells

"Survey research is an organised attempt to analyse, interpret and report the present status of social institution, group or area".

- F. L. Whitney

Types of Surveys

Y The surveys may be classified as:

- (i) General or Specific surveys
- (ii) Regular and Ad-hoc surveys
- (iii) Preliminary and Final Surveys
- (iv) Census and Sample Surveys

(i) General or Specific Surveys

Y A general survey is conducted for collecting general information of any population, institution or phenomena "without any hypothesis".

Y While a specific surveys are conducted for specific problems or for testing the validity of some theory or hypotheses.

(ii) Regular or Ad hoc Surveys

Y If a survey is repeated for regular intervals to obtain continuous information, it is known as a regular survey.

Y It helps to study trend of the effect of time on the phenomena under the study.

Y For conducting regular surveys, a permanent machinery for collecting information has to be set up.

Y Ad hoc surveys are conducted once and for all and are non-repetitive.

- Y Such surveys may be conducted for in testing the hypothesis or supplementing some missing information regarding any research problem.

(iii) Preliminary and Final Surveys

- Y Preliminary survey is a pilot study to get first hand information/knowledge of the universe under study.
- Y It helps the researcher in preparing schedule or questionnaire and organising the survey on proper lines.
- Y Final surveys are made after the pilot study has been completed.

(iv) Census and Sample Surveys

- Y Census survey deals with the investigation of entire population.
- Y Under this method, the information is collected from each and every unit of the universe.
- Y Money, material, time and labour required for carrying out a census survey are bound to be extremely large but its results are more accurate and reliable.
- Y In case of sample survey only a small part of the universe which is representative of the whole population is taken and the information is collected.
- Y Thus, the sample surveys are more economical and less time and labour consuming.
- Y Sampling is the process of studying about the universe on the basis of representative samples drawn from the population and the procedure of obtaining information on the units constituting the sample is referred to as sample survey.
- Y The object of the sample survey is to obtain maximum information about the characteristics population with minimum cost, time and labour.

Advantages

- Y Survey method has the following advantages in comparison with other methods:

(i) Direct & close contact between Researcher and the Respondents

- Y In this method the researcher has to come in close and direct contact of the people, whom he wants to study.
- Y A survey brings the researcher in a position to come face to face with the realities of life and see things personally.

(ii) Greater Objective

- Y The survey method avoids the possibility of personal biases.
- Y Large number of field workers is employed for the collection of data.
- Y Thus, the data are not influenced by any one man's view or belief. Hence, greater degree of objectivity may be obtained under this method.

(iii) Testing the Validity of Theories

- Y Survey method is very useful in testing the validity of many theories.
- Y In many cases, it has been observed that actual surveys have led to entirely different results than arrived at through purely theoretical interpretations.

(iv) Formulation and Testing of Hypothesis

- Y Surveys have proved this usefulness in leading to the formulation of hypothesis.
- Y At a more advance stage, surveys are also helpful is putting the hypothesis to test.
- Y A general survey brings light to a number of problems that would have not been possible by pure theoretical analysis. The survey results may also provide new hypothesis that may be completely outside the scope of the existing theory and may lead to the new theory.

(v) Social Surveys are based on actual observations

- Y Under social survey methods, a researcher is in a position to observe the activities of a group under study from a much closer distance.
- Y It helps a researcher to have a better insight to their doing.
- Y Personal approach enables the researcher in getting reliable information as the investigator is in a position to clear up doubts and misunderstandings on the spot specially when the respondents are literates.

(vi) Universal Application

- Y It is one of widely used methods.
- Y In case of social sciences, where experimental method is not easily possible, survey method is the most scientific method for providing reliable information and thereby drawing inferences.

Limitations

- Y Although survey method has a great significance, there are some limitations commonly attributed to this method:
 - (i) Survey method is costly, time consuming and wasteful in certain cases where the objectives are limited.
 - (ii) The survey method is unsuitable if the number of persons to be surveyed is very large or they are spread over a large geographical area.
 - (iii) The survey method lacks flexibility. In case of inadequate or incomplete research design or any change in research design, may mean conducting the survey afresh as there is no other remedy in such cases.
 - (iv) Under this method it is very difficult to verify the accuracy of the data collected because accuracy of the data, to a great extent, is dependent upon the honesty, sincerity, personal qualities and un biased attitude of the enumerators and cooperation of the respondents.

- (v) Survey method is only useful for current problems and is not suitable for the problem that requires the study in the historical perspectives.
- (vi) Social survey method does not permit more comprehensive and dynamic study of the society. It deals with the problems of immediate importance only.
- (vii) Under this method most of the surveys are conducted on sample basis. If a sample survey is not carefully planned and executed, the inferences drawn may be inaccurate and misleading.

Steps of a Social Survey

Y The essential steps involved in planning and execution of a social survey are as follows:

(i) Selection of a Problem

Y The most important thing to be decided by the researcher is the selection of a research problem.

Y By choosing a topic of his liking can pursue has own interest to the farthest limits.

Y The topic selected should be practically feasible, manageable, and of practical importance.

Y There must not be nay haste in deciding his topic non defining its scope.

Y While deciding the topic the researcher should also take into account the availability of necessary facilities, equipments, information and the services kind of research.

(ii) Preliminary Study or Pilot Study

Y After the selection of the research problem, the next step for the researcher is to conduct a pilot study which will help him to acquaint himself with all the available material and literature in the field.

(iii) General Objectives of the Study

Y The purpose of social survey is simply to provide someone with information.

Y The objectives, which initiates a researcher usually expressed in broad terms, are known as general objectives.

Y These objectives define the area and the scope of the research but they are small in numbers.

(iv) Specific Objectives

Y The broad-based objectives are broken down into numerous specific objectives and the hypothesis to be tested by the researcher is formed from the specific objectives at this stage.

(v) Resources and Personnel's

Y At the early stage of the social survey it is desirable to prepare a financial budget.

- Y A researcher should also estimate the staff required for survey and lay down qualifications of the staff to be recruited.
- Y All this facilitates the researcher to conduct the social survey smoothly.

(vi) Sampling

- Y In a social survey sometime complete coverage of the universe is neither possible nor advisable.
- Y In such circumstances a representative sample is drawn.
- Y At this stage following decisions must be made regarding the sample to be surveyed:
 - (a) What the universe of the survey is to be?
 - (b) What type of sample is to be used?
 - (c) What is the appropriate sampling unit?
 - (d) What is the size and design of the sample which is to be drawn to give the required accuracy?
 - (e) Is sample drawn feasible, practical and economical?

(vii) Method of Collecting Data

- Y The method by which the sample is contacted is determined.
- Y Depending upon the nature of the research problem, questionnaires, personal interviews and schedules are prepared by which the sample is to be contacted and data are accordingly collected from the respondents.

(viii) Training of Investigators

- Y The success of a survey depends upon the quality of investigating and who interviews the respondents and collects the required information.
- Y The investigating staff should be required to establish a friendly relationship with the respondents and put them at ease.
- Y The interview with the respondents should be held in an informal and conversational style.
- Y The interviewer should remain impartial.
- Y To conduct the interviews successfully and collect adequate and reliable data, the investigators should be given proper training.

(ix) Organisation of Field Work

- Y After the preparation of the questionnaire and training of the interviewers, provision should be made for careful; supervision of the interviewers because in the field work several technical and non-technical problem may arise.

Y To deal with the problem successfully, survey or issues instructions that arise from time to time.

Y At times, the surveyor has to seek the guidance of the experts to conducts the field work successfully.

(x) Content Analysis

Y After obtaining the information from the field staff, the information collected should be scrutinized for errors commissions etc., before they are ready for coding.

Y After scrutiny of the collected information, the scheme of tabulation and coding should be finalised.

Y The data collected may be reduced if they are put in suitable tables.

(xi) Analysis

Y After the tabulation and coding of collected data, a scheme of analysis should be drawn up and data may be analysed by suitable statistical methods to determine their reliability.

Y The main purpose of the analysis is to summarise the compete observation in such a way that they yield specific answers to the research questions.

(xii) Reporting

Y The last phase of social survey is the report writing of a research report.

Y The report should contain a detailed statement of the different stages of the survey, the types of estimates contained along with their precisions.

Y A report is written embodying the survey findings.

Y These findings are interpreted and policy decisions are suggested.

Experimental Method

❖ This method is based on the experiments conducted in a laboratory. Hence it is also known as 'Laboratory Research'.

❖ Research in terms of laboratory experiments in physics, chemistry, biology, nuclear science etc. is examples of laboratory research.

❖ Certain social science researchers feel that laboratory research is impossible or extremely difficult in social sciences and it may not serve a useful purpose.

❖ However, there is no ground for such exceptions and laboratory research is highly useful though a bit difficult even in social sciences.

❖ The only problem is to set up a social science research laboratory, and to create environmental conditions, then it will be produce excellent result.

- ❖ In management science also laboratory research can produce tremendous results.

Definition

- ❖ Some of the definitions are as follows:

"The essence of an experiment may be described as observing the effect on a dependent variable of the manipulation of an independent variable" - Festinger.

"An experiment is the proof of a hypothesis which seeks to look up two factors in a casual relationship through the study of contracting situations which have been controlled on all factors except the one of interest the latent being either the hypothetical case or the hypothetical effect" - Greenwood.

Application of Experimental Method

- ❖ Experimental Method is very useful in economic research.
- ❖ Following techniques are generally adopted as experimental method in economic research
 - Model building
 - Input output Method
 - Cost-Benefit Method
 - Linear Programming Method
- ❖ The basic designs for logical proof were formulated by J. S. Mills which still remains the foundation of experimental procedure, although many refinements have been made.
- ❖ Experiment under this method are made with a view to have an idea about the extent of the reliability that can be placed on a particular conclusion arrived at.
- ❖ For example, if a farmer wants to know whether a new type of fertilisers will give him better yields, he will frame his investigation in terms of some suitable hypothesis.
- ❖ After this he will design an experiment to find out whether the hypothesis which he has presumed is correct or whether it is wrong and consequently has to be rejected.
- ❖ The accuracy of the results highly depend on the selection of the design. If we select a wrong design it is quite likely that the observations arrived at may be absolutely fallacious.

- ❖ In making experiments, many complications and doubts are bound to come/arise and unless they are removed, the experimental design will not be adequate to give accurate results.
- ❖ Thus, the experimental designs are concerned with the arranging of treatments in such a manner that the inferences and conclusions regarding the effect of these treatments can be easily done and the reliability measured.
- ❖ The design of an experiment has the function of providing for collection of facts in such a manner that inferences of a casual relationship between the dependent and independent variables can be drawn.
- ❖ While framing an experimental design, some important aspects should be kept in mind such as the method of selecting experimental and controlled groups, measurement of dependent and independent variables, time of measurement, pattern of controlled groups used and the number of possible casual variables.
- ❖ The purpose of an experimental design is to obtain maximum information with minimum of cost and labour.
- ❖ For this purpose, two groups are chosen in such a manner that they do not differ from each other in significant respects except by chance.
- ❖ One of these groups is called as the experimental group and the other as the controlled group.
- ❖ The two groups are thus compared in terms of the assured effect.

Advantages

- (i) This approach is more rigorous. It has the advantage of scientific and rigour and mathematical logic insofar as the entire piece of research work is based on a well founded model.
- (ii) In comparison to other methods, this approach permits the determination of cause and effect relationship more precisely and clearly. Such a framework is always a better tool of analysis.
- (iii) This method is also advantageous insofar as, under identified conditions, a lot of it depends on the behaviour of the respondent.

Limitations

- ❖ This method is criticised on the ground that it does not make any solid contribution to knowledge but merely helps in consolidating the facts that have already been existing.

- ❖ In practice, the use of experimental method in social research is much more complicated. There are practical difficulties to random sampling. Losses of cases and shrinkage in numbers in each group during the period of observation.
- ❖ Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, experimental method is now playing an important role/part in research in psychology, sociology, anthropology and other social sciences.

Other Methods

Field Investigation Research

- ❖ A field experiment is a research study in a realistic situation in which one or more independent variables are manipulated by the experimenter under as carefully controlled conditions as the situation will permit.
- ❖ Where the laboratory experiment has maximum control, most field studies must operate with less control a factor that is often a severe handicap to the experiment.
- ❖ The weakness of field experiment, therefore, is of practical nature. The investigator himself works under several influences and many times face unpleasant situations.

Advantages

- ❖ A field experiment is generally credited with a few virtues which are supposed to be unique to this category.
- ❖ Some of them are:
 - (i) The variables in a field experiment. This is because of the fact that field situation takes stock of realistic natural operations.
 - (ii) Field experiments have the advantage of investigating more fruitfully the dynamics of inter-relationships of small groups of variables.
 - (iii) Field experimental studies are also ideal to testing of the theory and to the solution of the real world problems.
- ❖ Field experimental studies, therefore, are important part of the applied research which, at times, play an important role in pointing out the nature and direction of the refinements required for an existing doctrinaires.
- ❖ A practical difficulty in the field of this research is that of randomisation of units in the given population.

- ❖ Unless the field of operation has been selected in an objective and scientific manner, the investigations may not proceed on the lines devised by the researcher.
- ❖ Many a times the combination of dependent and independent variables may be such that the dependent variables are not responsive to the change occurring in independent variables.

Evaluation Research

- ❖ Evaluation research is a recent addition to the types of research.
- ❖ This type of research is primarily directed to evaluate the performance of the developmental projects and other economic programmes that have already been implemented.
- ❖ The objective being to realistically assess the impact of any such programmes.
- ❖ The evaluation is carried out with respect to the broader charge and major objectives of a programme.
- ❖ Evaluation, these days, does not only aim at the physical achievement of a project but also at the size and direction of variables that the project has resulted in attitudes, interests, thinking patterns, work habits, socio-cultural adaptability and psycho-dynamics of the population in which or around which the project has been launched.
- ❖ Evaluation Research is of three types:
 - (i) Concurrent Evaluation,
 - (ii) Phasic or periodic evaluation, and
 - (iii) Terminal Evaluation.

Concurrent Evaluation

- ❖ Concurrent evaluation is a continuing process of an inspection of the project that has been launched.
- ❖ The word 'concurrent' itself points out to the fact that the evaluation goes on side by side with the implementation of a project.
- ❖ Such types of research not only evaluate the performance but also stimulate it and give directions and control as and when possible.

Phasic or Periodic Evaluation

- ❖ This type of evaluation takes place at different phases or stages of performances of the project.

- ❖ It enables us to evaluate the performance of the completed phase and make adjustments in the subsequent phases after keeping in view the failures and success of the previous phase.

Terminal Evaluation

- ❖ Terminal evaluation is the evaluation of the final phase of the project
- ❖ Once the project has been completed, an overall assessment is made to see how best a project has served the objective for which it was launched.
- ❖ While carrying out the evaluation research a researcher can scientifically look into the performance of the project in relation to the objective that has been laid out and inline with the processes that had been recommended for its implementation.

Action Research

- ❖ This is a recent classification. This type of research is conducted through direct action.
- ❖ The actual study may consist of a number of phases, say, base-line survey, systematic action, periodical assessment, etc.
- ❖ A good example of action research is a study of test marketing.
- ❖ A base-line survey is initially conducted and the informants are identified; and this is followed by the distribution of the products under study and then an assessment of survey.
- ❖ It is very useful method in consumer product.
- ❖ Even in the case of industrial products, machinery and consumer durable, the action research method is used when, instead of distributing the product, demonstration is made as a part of action research.
- ❖ By its very definition, it is research through launching of a direct action with the objective of obtaining workable solutions to the given problems.
- ❖ Action research is spread over different phases such as a base-line survey, where all the possible information of research interest is collected to enable the researcher to acquaint himself with the existing or operational situations.

- ❖ At a subsequent stage, changes, modifications and other improvements are made in the functional aspects of the project.
- ❖ Finally, the whole process culminates in the evaluation of the project as a whole.
- ❖ Action research warrants all through insight into the research problem and an equally effective command over the action proposed to be launched for research findings.

Ex-Post Facto Research

- ❖ This is an empirical research and the researcher does not have any control over independent variables, because they have already been manifested.
- ❖ Ex-post facto research is a systematic empirical enquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of/over the independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are already inherently not manipulated.
- ❖ Inferences about relations among variables are made without direct intervention.
- ❖ This kind of research is based on a scientific and analytical examination of dependent and independent variables.
- ❖ Independent variables are studied in retrospect for seeking plausible relations and the likely affect, also that the changes in independent variables produce on a single or a set of dependent variables.
- ❖ In ex-post facto research, the researcher's control on the behaviour of independent variables is very weak and in many cases no control is possible.
- ❖ Ex-post facto research, therefore, has to take things as they are and examine separately or wholly their impact on the explained variables.
- ❖ In social-scientific research, there always exists a possibility of identifying depend and independent variables either single or in-groups and this postulate models for carrying out their analysis for researcher's utility.
- ❖ The ex-post facto research may be carried out on a limited scale or on a very large scale depending upon what techniques of research are available with the researcher and what to the nature of investigation that researcher has undertaken.

Limitations

❖ Ex-post facto research too has some of the weaknesses, which, at times, obstruct its application and adaptability on a larger scale. These are:

(i) The inability to control the changing patterns of independent variables. As such, in many situations, it becomes very difficult and some time impossible to dis-entangle the separate influences of independent or dependent one.

It often tends to create the problem of multi-collinearity and has a bearing on the whole model.

(ii) The ex-post facto research findings owes the risk of improper interpretations. Thus is mainly due to the fact that the control on independent variable is very weak which subsequently hampers the research findings.

(iii) The ex-post factor research may not have any particular hypothesis as there is likelihood that such an hypothesis may predict spurious relationship between independent and dependent variables. Modern research is always carried out with a well judged and will designed hypothesis in order to give direction and purpose to the piece of research work.

❖ However, despite these weaknesses there is considerable scope for conducting research of this type in social sciences.

❖ Since most of the social behavioural problems cannot be subjected to experimental investigations, ex-post facto research is a good explanatory instrument of changes that take place in the dependent variables.

❖ If the set of independent variables is carefully selected and proper techniques adopted for analysis, meaningful insights can be gained into the changing pattern of dependent variables.

❖ It can even be said that ex-post facto research is more important than experimental research. This is not a methodological observation but it means that most important social scientific research problems also not lend themselves to experimentation.

Laboratory Research

❖ By definition, this type of research is confined to laboratory experiments alone.

❖ The basic feature of such research is that there exists a possibility of exercising control over independent variables and isolating their influences for plausible explanations.

- ❖ This type of research has a limited application in social sciences as it is extremely difficult to study social variable in isolation of each other.
- ❖ However, it may, at times be possible to create a situation, wherein a maximum control can be exercised to keep the variations among the independent variables at a minimum.
- ❖ By making use of experimental research we can make out what happens, over a period of time, to a group of slum dwellers residing in a low rent public housing project, mean while a observing the change in a control group of low income families.
- ❖ Laboratory experiments usually helps to discover relations under pure and contaminated conditions. These are also treated as testifiable from known theories and models and also help us component to refine or modify the existing theories and a related hypothesis.

Business Games

- ❖ A business game is a more improved version of the role played technique.
- ❖ Here, instead of one decision at a particular point of time, the participants are required to take a series of decisions at different time periods. For example, they are divided into groups, each group representing an independent firm in the same industry.
- ❖ A game is played in different situations, covering a particular operating and a strategic decision.
- ❖ The "O" period situations provides all the basic information, as in the role play, and also in the economic forecast for the next period.
- ❖ Other situation theories up the capabilities and limitations of the company and a set of alternative courses of action.
- ❖ The participants evaluate all the available courses of action and takes appropriate decisions.
- ❖ The instructor works out the performance of the enterprises in accordance with the decisions, which forms part of the information for the next period in which a new set of alternatives are provided for participants to select from.
- ❖ At the end of all the situations, the group that shows the best performance is adjudged the best decision-makers.
- ❖ Generally, during the course of the game, the participants are exposed to a number of strategic and operational decisions, covering all the functional areas.

- ❖ In business games the discussions are confined to the members of each group and no representation is made in the class room.
- ❖ The need to evaluate the likely performance, as a result of the decision, provides the additional exercise for participants.
- ❖ The participants can get a feel of the continuity of the effects of their decisions upon the enterprise in the long run. They can watch the progress of the enterprise over a period of years, assess the directions which it takes and initiate corrective measures with their counter-decisions, allowances for which are provided in subsequent situations.