

Creating and Implementing Effective Surveys

Principles of Proper Surveying

There are three principles of proper surveying that should be followed:

A. Ethics in Surveys

- The introduction must inform participants of the intentions of the survey.
- Respondents must be willing to participate.
- Names of participants must be kept confidential.
- Personal information must be kept private.

B. Design for Honest Responses

- If answers are kept anonymous and confidential, participants are more likely to be honest with their responses.
- In multiple choice questions, include answers such as “Do not know”, “Not applicable”, or “Other” as responses, so respondents have an option that is not part of a given list.
- If using rating scales, make sure they are clear and offer a range of ratings.
- Make it easy to continue. Do not ask too many questions of the same type consecutively or force the respondent to think hard about their responses.
- Ask more difficult or sensitive questions near the end of the survey, and in a manner that does not encourage the participant to lie.

C. Eliminate Bias

- Avoid questions that lead the respondent to a particular answer or contain words that bring to mind negative things.
- Pose questions or scenarios that are neutral to avoid bias that favours certain cultures or ways of life.
- If choices have a natural order, such as “Yes or No”, or “Excellent, Very Good, Good”, use that order. Otherwise, change the order in subsequent questions so as not to influence the response.
- Consider the mode of delivery (personal interview, Internet, telephone, mail) that is most appropriate for the types of questions being asked.

Types of Survey Questions

There are five types of questions that can be used in a survey:

- A. **Dichotomous** – Two part classification such as a “Yes or No” or “True or False”.

- B. **Multiple Choice** – Limited number of predefined answers.

- C. **Rating Scale** – Value on a scale.

- D. **Completion** – Fill in the blanks or answer with a single response.

- E. **Open-Ended** – Respondent can answer freely.

Types of Data

There are two types of data.

- A. **Primary Data** – Generated and collected by the researcher through experiments or observational studies.

- B. **Secondary Data** – Made available by others and gathered by the researcher.

It is generally better to use primary data because there may be errors in published data. Also, published data may not indicate how data was collected or limitations of the use of the data.

Data Collection

There are four steps that should be followed to ensure data collected in an experiment is accurate and fair.

1. Plan and set up the experiment in advance.
2. Set up a recording sheet to record the results of the experiment.
3. Use a random sampling technique to select your participants.
4. Keep the conditions the same for all participants.