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## Basics of Academic Project Preparation

### Unit 3

**Q: What do you understand by open-ended and close-ended questions?** *(www.prepNext.com)*

**Ans:**

Basically, two special types of questions i.e. open-ended and close-ended questions are used in a questionnaire. The open-ended questions consist of such questions which the respondent can answer according to their choice. On the other hand, closed-ended question are those types of questions which can't be answered according to free will of the respondent.

#### **OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:**

In open-ended questionnaire, the questions are open and the respondents can fill-up the answers according to their feelings and thoughts.

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Example: What do you think are the major drawbacks of social networking sites?

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The example above is an example of open-ended question. In this type of questions, instead of asking the respondents to make a choice from the given possible answers, generally blank space is provided for the respondent to answer in his own words.

**Advantages:**

The advantages of open-ended questionnaires are:

1. It allows the respondent to answer according to their feeling and thoughts.
2. It does not limit the thought-process of the respondents.

**Disadvantage:**

The disadvantages of open-ended questionnaires are:

1. The data so obtained are sometimes difficult to interpret and analyse. From an analytical point of view, open-ended questions are more difficult to handle, raising problems of interpretation, comparability and interviewer bias.

**CLOSE-ENDED QUESTIONS:**

Close-ended questions are the questions that provide respondents with a set of alternative choices from which a respondent have to select his answer. All questions and answers are specified and comments in the respondent's own words are held to the minimum. The following is an example:

**Example:** Which of the following e-commerce websites do you prefer the most?

- Flipkart
- Amazon
- Snapdeal
- Homeshop18

**Advantages:**

The advantages of close-ended questions are:

1. As multiple answers of each question are given, it becomes easy for the respondent to answer.
2. It is easy to analyse and interpret the result.
3. The provision of alternative replies, at times, helps to understand the meaning of the question clearly.
4. It is quick and relatively inexpensive to analyse the close-ended questions.

**Disadvantages:**

The disadvantages of close-ended questions are:

1. Respondent's choices are limited to the supplied answers only.
2. It, sometimes, forces the respondent to select answer from pre-determined options, though he may not fully agree with it. It may force a statement of opinion on an issue about which the respondent does not in fact have any opinion.
3. They are usually considered inappropriate in investigations where the aim is to probe for attitudes and reasons for certain actions or feelings.

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**Q: Discuss the main aspects of a questionnaire.**

*(www.prepNext.com)*

**Ans:**

A questionnaire generally consists of pre-determined questions, set in sequences, which have close relationship with the problem to be studied or phenomena. It is one of the most important research tools.

If the questionnaire is not properly set up, then the survey is bound to fail. This fact requires us to study the main aspects of a questionnaire viz., (1) the general form, (2) question sequence, and (3) question formulation and wording.

### **1. General form:**

So far as the general form of a questionnaire is concerned, it can either be **structured** or **unstructured** questionnaire. Structured questionnaires are those questionnaires in which there are definite, concrete and pre-determined questions. The questions are presented with exactly the same wording and in the same order to all respondents. The form of the question may be either closed or open but should be stated in advance and not constructed during questioning.

in an unstructured questionnaire, the interviewer is provided with a general guide on the type of information to be obtained, but the exact question formulation is largely his own responsibility and the replies are to be taken down in the respondent's own words to the extent possible.

### **2. Question sequence:**

The question-sequence in a questionnaire must be clear and smoothly-moving. The relation of one question to another should be readily apparent to the respondent, with questions that are easiest to answer being put in the beginning. The first few questions are particularly important because they are likely to influence the attitude of the respondent in seeking his desired cooperation. The opening questions should be such as to arouse human interest. The following type of questions should generally be avoided as opening questions in a questionnaire.

- (a) Questions that put too great a strain on the memory or intellect of the respondent;
- (b) Questions of a personal character,
- (c) Questions related to personal wealth, etc.

Following the opening questions, we should have questions that are really vital to the research problem. Ideally, the question-sequence should conform to the respondent's way of thinking. Relatively difficult questions must be relegated towards the end so that even if



the respondent decides not to answer such questions, considerable information would have already been obtained. Thus, question-sequence should usually go from the general to the more specific.

### **3. Question formulation and wording:**

Each question must be very clear so as to avoid any misunderstanding. All questions should meet the following standards—(a) should be easily understood; (b) should be simple; (c) should be concrete and should conform as much as possible to the respondent's way of thinking. For instance, instead of asking, "How many razor blades do you use annually?" The more realistic question would be to ask, "How many razor blades did you use last week?"

There are two principal forms of questions, viz., close-end question and the open-end question. In the former the respondent selects one of the alternative possible answers put to him, whereas in the latter he has to supply the answer in his own words. In practice, one rarely comes across a case when one questionnaire relies on one form of questions alone. The various forms complement each other. As such questions of different forms are included in one single questionnaire.

Researcher must pay proper attention to the **wordings of questions** since it affects the reliability of the data collected. Since words are likely to affect responses, they should be properly chosen. Simple words, which are familiar to all respondents, should be employed. Words with ambiguous meanings must be avoided. Similarly, danger words, catch-words or words with emotional connotations should be avoided. Caution must also be exercised in the use of phrases which reflect upon the prestige of the respondent. Question wording, in no case, should bias the answer.

**Q: Explain in brief the guidelines for constructing questionnaire/ schedule.** *(www.prepNext.com)*

**Ans:**

A good questionnaire is clear, unambiguous and workable. It should be designed in such a way so that it can minimise potential errors from respondents. The researcher must pay attention to the following points in constructing an appropriate and effective questionnaire or a schedule:

**1. Clarity about research problem:**

Before developing a questionnaire one must determine what the study is all about. The researcher must keep in view the problem he is to study for it provides the starting point for developing the questionnaire. He must be clear about the various aspects of his research problem to be dealt with in the course of research.

**2. Determining the form of questions:**

Appropriate form of questions depends on the nature of information sought, the sampled respondents and the kind of analysis intended. It needs to be decided whether structured or unstructured questions are to be used. The researcher must decide whether to use closed or open-ended questions.

**3. Determining the sequence of questions:**

The researcher should decide which question will come first and which one will fall later. Each question should follow comfortably from the previous questions. Transitions between questions should be smooth. In questionnaire the general questions come first and more specific questions come in the later part of the questionnaire. Finally, personal questions should not be asked at the beginning.

#### **4. Deciding the wording of the questions**

The researcher must phrase questions in terms that the respondent can understand. Questions should be simple and easy to understand. Technical terms and vague expressions capable of different interpretations should be avoided in a questionnaire.

#### **5. Framing Cross-Check Questions:**

There should be some control questions in the questionnaire which indicate the reliability of the respondent. For instance, a question designed to determine the consumption of particular material may be asked first in terms of financial expenditure and later in terms of weight. The control questions, thus, introduce a cross-check to see whether the information collected is correct or not.

#### **6. Rough Draft:**

Rough draft of the Questionnaire should be prepared, giving due thought to the appropriate sequence of putting questions.

#### **7. Revision of rough draft:**

Researcher must re-examine, and in case of need should revise the rough draft for a better one. Technical defects must be minutely scrutinised and removed.

#### **8. Pilot study:**

Pilot study should be undertaken for pre-testing the questionnaire. The researcher can be mindful of the practical problems inherent in the questionnaire with the help of the pilot study. The questionnaire may be edited in the light of the results of the pilot study.

#### **9. Directions for the respondents:**

Questionnaire must contain simple but straight forward directions for the respondents so that they may not feel any difficulty in answering the questions.



### **10. Cover Letter:**

The importance of cover letter should not be underestimated. Questionnaire has to be attached with the cover letter to persuade the respondent to complete the survey.

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**Q: What are the reasons for non-response to a questionnaire? Explain the methods of getting response from respondents who are not willing to respond.** *(www.prepNext.com)*

### **Ans.:**

The word questionnaire refers to device for securing answers to questions by using a printed form which the respondent fills in himself. It is very unlikely to achieve a 100% response rate of the questionnaire. However, a high non-response rate may suggest that the data collected is not representative.

Non-responses to a questionnaire may happen for a variety of reasons:

**(a) Ineligibles:** These refer to people who have been selected, but do not meet the criteria to participate in the research. This problem should be minimised by being more careful in ensuring that only eligible people are originally included in the population from which the sample is to be drawn.

**(b) Unavailable:** These may occur for a variety of reasons; the person has gone away, is slow in opening the post, is on holiday or has gone away on business. The input of such people will not be represented in the data one collects.



**(c) Refusals:** These refer to people who have been approached or have received a questionnaire, but do not wish to participate in the research.

**(d) Other sources of non-response are:**

- (i) There may also be cases where the respondent has agreed to take the questionnaire but has not responded to or refused to respond to certain questions.
- (ii) Incorrect responses, like ticking more than the required number of boxes, etc,

Non response can create problems like:

- a) Unacceptable reduction in sample size
- b) Making the conclusion and generalization difficult.
- c) Creeping of bias into the investigation scenario (it may be both the investigator-driven as well as the respondent-driven)

### **METHODS OF GETTING RESPONSE FROM RESPONDENTS**

The researcher is not generally present when the questionnaire reaches the respondent. Therefore, to respond or not to respond is the will of the respondent. In order to get responses to questionnaire, several methods have been developed. Some common important ways of getting response are explained below:

**1. Self-addressed envelope:** After designing the questionnaire, it needs to be sent to the respondent. Normally, the respondent has little incentive to return the questionnaire due to monetary loss. Therefore, the questionnaire must be accompanied with self-addressed and pre-paid envelope. Unless such courtesies are observed, we can't hope to get response from respondent.

**2. Incentives:** In order to ensure the return of the questionnaire, some researchers prefer monetary incentive. The success with monetary incentive is possible if the money offered is adequate and proportionate to the labour involved in filling up the questionnaire. Inclusion of stamps is also a type of monetary incentive.

**3. Appeal:** A convincing 'appeal' about the value of research project should be given with questionnaire to ensure response from the respondents. If the respondent is convinced about the utility of the research, he is more likely to respond.

**4. Reminders:** The most popular method that is generally used to ensure response is the reminders. The reminder must be issued at adequate intervals. This ensures timely return of the filled-up questionnaire.

**5. Mediation:** Mediation may sometime be used in order to ensure replies. This method is useful, but it, sometimes, creates negative feeling among the respondent for not having been approached directly.

**6. Waiting Patiently:** To counter the postal irregularities, and to ensure timely receipt of the questionnaire, the reply from the respondent should be patiently waited till the response comes.

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**Q: Explain the characteristics/ essentials of a good questionnaire.**

*(www.prepNext.com)*

**Ans.:**

The essentials of a good questionnaire are:

1. Questionnaire should be comparatively short and simple i.e., the size of the questionnaire should be kept to the minimum.

2. Questions should proceed in logical sequence moving from easy to more difficult questions.
3. Personal and intimate questions should be left to the end.
4. Technical terms and vague expressions capable of different interpretations should be avoided in a questionnaire.
5. Questions may be dichotomous (yes or no answers), multiple choice (alternative answers listed) or open ended. The latter type of questions is often difficult to analyse and hence should be avoided in a questionnaire to the extent possible.
6. There should be some control questions in the questionnaire which indicate the reliability of the respondent. For instance, a question designed to determine the consumption of particular material may be asked first in terms of financial expenditure and later in terms of weight. The control questions, thus, introduce a cross-check to see whether the information collected is correct or not.
7. Questions affecting the sentiments of respondents should be avoided.
8. Adequate space for answers should be provided in the questionnaire to help editing and tabulation.
9. There should always be provision for indications of uncertainty, e.g., “do not know,” “no preference” and so on.
10. Brief directions with regard to filling up the questionnaire should invariably be given in the questionnaire itself.
11. The physical appearance of the questionnaire affects the cooperation the researcher receives from the recipients and as such an attractive looking questionnaire, particularly in mail surveys, is a plus point for enlisting cooperation. The quality of the paper, along with its colour, must be good so that it may attract the attention of recipients.
12. A guarantee must be given to the respondents that the information provided by them shall not be misused, and that their names shall be kept confidential.



**Q: Describe the sampling techniques adopted in the social science research with examples.** (www.prepNext.com)

**Ans:**

Sampling may be defined as the selection of some part of an aggregate or totality on the basis of which an inference about the aggregate or totality is made. In other words, it is the process of obtaining information about an entire population by examining only a part of it. The selected units constitute what is technically called a 'sample' and the selection process is called 'sampling technique.'

**Various Sampling Techniques Adopted in the Social Science Research:**

There are a number of sampling techniques that can be adopted in a social science research. These techniques can be broadly divided into two categories:

- (I) Probability Sampling and
- (II) Non- Probability Sampling

**PROBABILITY SAMPLING:**

Probability sampling is also known as 'random sampling' or 'chance sampling'. Under this sampling design, each element has a known probability of being included in the sample. There exist a wide range of probability sampling techniques. Some of these are explained below:

**(i) Simple Random Sampling:** Under simple random sampling, every element of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample and each possible sample has an equal probability of being selected.

*For example,* if we have to select a sample of 500 items from a universe of 25,000 items, then we can put the names or numbers of all the 25,000 items on slips of paper and conduct a lottery.



**(ii) Stratified Random Sampling:** Under stratified sampling the population is divided into several sub-populations, called strata, that are individually more homogeneous than the total population and then items from each stratum are selected to constitute a sample.

*For example,* to determine the attitude of students toward a new teaching plan, a university with 20 colleges might stratify the students with respect to streams of education, namely, Commerce, Science and Arts. If the items selected from each stratum is based on simple random sampling the entire procedure is known as stratified random sampling.

**(iii) Systematic Random Sampling:** In some instances, the most practical way of sampling is to select every 15<sup>th</sup> name on a list, every 10<sup>th</sup> house on one side of a street and so on. Sampling of this type, in which elements are selected from the population at uniform intervals, is known as systematic sampling. An element of randomness is introduced into this kind of sampling by using random numbers to pick up the unit with which to start.

*For instance,* if a 4 percent sample is desired, the first item would be selected randomly from the first twenty-five items, from a list of all items, and thereafter every 25<sup>th</sup> item would automatically be included in the sample.

**(iv) Cluster Sampling and Area Sampling:** In cluster sampling the total population is divided into a number of relatively small subdivisions which are themselves clusters of still smaller units and then some of these clusters are randomly selected for inclusion in the overall sample.

*Suppose* that there are 20000 machine parts in an inventory at a given point of time, stored in 200 cases of 100 each; and we want to estimate the proportion of defective machine-parts in the inventory. Now, using a cluster sampling, we may consider the 200 cases as clusters and randomly select 'n' cases and examine all the machine-parts in each randomly selected case.

If clusters happen to be some geographical subdivision, in that case cluster sampling is better known as '**Area Sampling**'. Under area

sampling we first divide the total area into a number of smaller non-overlapping areas, generally called geographical clusters, then a number of these smaller areas are randomly selected, and all units in these small areas are included in the sample.

**(v) Multi –Stage Sampling:** Multi-stage sampling is a further development of the principle of cluster sampling. Suppose we want to investigate the working efficiency of nationalized banks in India and we want to take a sample of few banks for this purpose. The first stage is to select large primary sampling units such as states in a country. Then we may select certain districts and interview all banks in the chosen districts. This would represent a two-stage sampling design with the ultimate sampling units being clusters of districts. If instead of taking a census of all banks within the selected districts, we select certain towns and interview all banks in the chosen towns. This would represent a three-stage sampling design.

**(vi) Random Route Sampling:** It is used in market research surveys – mainly for sampling households, shops, garages and other premises in urban areas. Address is selected at random from sampling frame (usually electoral register) as a starting point. Further addresses are identified by taking alternate left-and right-hand turns at road junctions and calling at every nth address (shop, garage etc.)

### **NON- PROBABILITY SAMPLING:**

Non-probability sampling is that sampling procedure which does not afford any basis for estimating the probability that each item in the population has of being included in the sample. The judgement of the organizers of the study plays an important part in such sampling designs. A few of the non-probability sampling techniques are discussed below:

**(i) Convenience Sampling:** *When population elements are selected for inclusion in the sample based on the ease of access, it can be called convenience sampling. For example, a student of Sociology, conducting an investigation in connection with his/her doctorate thesis, while selecting persons to be interviewed, may select those known to him/her or those introduced through a common friend.*

**(ii) Purposive Sampling:** *Purposive sampling method involves purposive or deliberate selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represents the universe. As the name suggests, the people or items selected are driven by a specific purpose which the researcher has in mind.*

**(iii) Expert Sampling:** *Expert sampling involves the assembling of a sample of persons with known or demonstrable experience and expertise in some area. For example, a panel of experts.*

**(iv) Quota Sampling:** *Under quota sampling the interviewers are simply given quotas to be filled from the different strata, with some restrictions on how they are to be filled. In other words, the actual selection of the items for the sample is left to the interviewer's discretion.*

**(v) Heterogeneity Sampling:** *This technique is useful when one wants to include all opinions or views, and is not concerned about representing these views proportionately. In many brainstorming or nominal group processes (including concept mapping), one can use some form of heterogeneity sampling because in such cases primary interest is in getting broad spectrum of ideas.*

**(vi) Snowball Sampling:** *In snowball sampling, one begins by identifying someone who meets the criteria for inclusion in the study. He is then asked to recommend others whom he may know and who also meets the criteria. This technique is useful in reaching populations that are inaccessible or hard to find.*