UNIT 7: INTERVIEW

UNIT STRUCTURE

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7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to -

- understand the basic meaning of interview
- discuss the different types of interview
- understand importance of interview as an instrument of research
- know how to conduct interview

7.2 INTRODUCTION

In a research, interview is the most common method of data collection. Every research, be it qualitative or quantitative, is dependent on the collection, accumulation and analysis of data. Only then shall the researcher be able to find feasible conclusion to his/her research. . This method is also always specific to one's research. Generally it is the usual

method of social survey in situations where the education level of the interviewee is moderate to low, or in situations where data are to be collected both from the educated and less educated people. Again, it may be considered to be one of the most important techniques of data collection in studies of human behaviour. Interview method boosts the confidence of the researcher as it makes the researcher feel that the data collected by him/her is true, honest and original. In the previous unit, we have learned about the types of data and also that interview is a method of collecting Primary data. In this unit we shall learn about meaning and objectives of interview, types of interview, importance of interview guide and how to conduct an interview.

7.3 INTERVIEW : MEANING AND DEFINITIONS

In simple terms, interview is the verbal conversation between two people aiming at the collection of relevant information for the purpose of research. It is a technique where the interviewer asks questions to elicit information from the respondent. That is why it is a very personal and direct form of research.

McNamara defines interview as a particularly useful method of getting the story behind a participant's experiences. According to him through this method the interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic.

According to Good & Hatt (1952), "Interview is a close face to face conversation or dialogue between the investigator or interviewer and the interviewee."

For P.V. Young (1966), Interview is "a scientific method through which a person enters into the life of a stranger"

Based on the above definitions we can say that Interview is a verbal communication or two way conversation through which the researcher obtains information about a problematic situation.

7.4 OBJECTIVES OF INTERVIEW

Following are the major objectives of a Research Interview

- To collect information about an existing problem in society

- To create a source of true, original and firsthand knowledge
- To identify the true feelings of the respondent regarding a particular situation
- To provide the researcher with a rich hypothesis
- To aid the researcher in observing and understanding the situation quickly
- To gain new knowledge and additional information about a research area
- To help the researcher to draw quantitative facts and conclusions

7.5 CATEGORIES OF INTERVIEW

There are different types of interviews in terms of structure, roll of the interviewer, number of respondents, and types of research. Some of those are personal interview, self- administered interview, focus group interview, standardized interview, depth interview, interview over telephone or computer etc. all these types of interview can be brought under three broad categories-

- Structured Interview
- Unstructured Interview
- Semi- Structured Interview

These are discussed as below-

7.5.1 Structured Interview

Structured interview is a technique of interview generally applied in quantitative research. It is most commonly seen in the form of questionnaires in survey research. In simple terms structured interview is a method of collecting data for a statistical survey. A set of questions both close-ended and open-ended are asked to the respondent and recorded accordingly. For this purpose the researcher prepares an interview schedule in which all respondents are asked the same questions with the same wording and in the same sequence. That is why it is also called formal interview or standardized interview. This kind of interview can be personal in nature, i.e. when the researcher conducts face to face

communication with the respondents or impersonal, which may happen over telephone conversation or computer.

In a structured interview the interviewer must act in a neutral and objective manner so that he/she offers the same impression to all respondents and in returns get un-biased answers to his/her questions. The consent of the respondents is also very important in a structured interview.

➢ **Advantages of Structured Interview :**

- The researcher asks every respondent the same set of questions. So these interviews can be conducted in a fairly quick time period.
- It is very easy to quantify the findings of a structured interview.
- Structured interview are most suitable when the number of respondents is huge because through such an interview the researcher can generalize about a large population.
- In a structured interview it is fairly easy to maintain the neutrality and objectivity of the researcher.

➢ **Disadvantages of Structured Interview :**

- Structured interview are inflexible in nature, i.e. a new question cannot be added during the interview.
- Structured interview lacks detail.
- The interviewer has no means of knowing whether the respondents were honest or dishonest.
- Structured interviews can answer the “what”, “how” and “when” of questions but not the reason or “why” behind those.

7.5.2 Unstructured Interview

Unstructured interview is an interview process generally used in qualitative research methods. In an unstructured interview, questions are not pre-arranged. Generally the interviewer engages the respondent with open-ended questions as and when required. It is completely opposite to structured interview and is a very flexible technique of Interaction. This kind of interview is also known as discovery interview or guided conversation.

Unstructured interview has some specific characteristics such as -

- The researcher does not have any fixed questions, he/she only has the general nature of questions in mind.
- There is no specific order in which the questions are asked.
- The researcher can ask any question based on the responses of the interviewees.
- Such an interview has no fixed time limit.

Unstructured interview are generally personal interviews where the researcher engages in vigorous conversation with the respondents to have a clear idea of the answer he/she seeks. Such an interview is most feasible for a lower number of respondents. Through an unstructured interview a researcher can find out the "why" of a research problem.

- **Advantages of Unstructured interview :**
  - It is flexible because questions can be adapted and changed based on the respondent's answers.
  - It is the most useful tool of generating qualitative data.
  - Interviewer can have a deeper understanding of the problem at hand.
  - There is spontaneity in unstructured interview that structured interview lacks.
- **Disadvantages of Unstructured interview :**
  - It is difficult to compare the answers of the respondents as the interviewer does not follow a fixed question pattern.
  - The reliability of data accumulated through unstructured interview is doubtful
  - It is an expensive and time consuming method of data collection
  - It is very difficult to maintain neutrality and objectivity in an unstructured interview.

7.5.3 Semi Structured Interview

This is the most common technique among the interview processes. The procedure of a semi-structured interview depends

on the instinct of the researcher. In such an interview, the interviewer may prepare a list of questions but does not necessarily ask them all or in a particular order. Sometimes the researcher only addresses some general topics, hence we can say that semi-structured interview depends on the responses of the respondent.

This kind of interview is always dependent on an interview guide which helps the researcher to interview different respondents in the manner most appropriate to gather information. So this is a spontaneous device of data collection which can be helpful in both qualitative as well as quantitative methods of research.

➢ **Characteristics of semi-structured interview :**

- Through semi-structured interview, researcher can create an accurate profile of the research area and ideal respondents.
- The most common practice of semi-structured interview is, asking open-ended questions and spontaneous conversation between the researcher and respondents.
- It is a two-way communication where both the researcher and the respondent can ask and answer questions.
- It is most effective when practiced by a well-trained and experienced interviewer.
- Without developing an interview guide, a researcher cannot conduct a semi-structured interview.

Advantages of semi-structured interview:

- Semi-structured interview is a detailed process of gathering information and hence most useful when a researcher does not get more than one chance to interview someone.
- In this kind of interview, the respondents are free to express their views in their own terms.
- Two-way communication is encouraged in semi-structured interview where the respondents can ask questions to the researcher.
- Often semi-structured interview provide a researcher not just answers, but also the reasons for those answers.
- It produces reliable and comparable qualitative data.

➢ **Disadvantages of semi-structured interview :**

- It is very difficult for a novice researcher to conduct semi-structured interview because interview skill are very important in these interviews.
- Analysis of data gathered from semi-structured interview is a complex task. Sometimes the researcher faces the risk of constructing to much
- It is an expensive and time-consuming technique of interview
- Ensuring confidentiality may pose a problem in a semi-structured interview.

7.6 MEANING AND NECESSITIES OF INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview guide is a list of general topics to be covered by the interviewer while conducting the interview. It is a tool used during semi-structured interviews. Interview guide helps the researcher to direct the conversation towards the issues that he/she wants to learn about. Interview guides may be highly scripted or relatively loose but serves the same purpose:

- What question to ask
- How to pose the question
- The sequence of questions
- What to do or say next

So we can say that an interview guide is a planning on the part of the researcher that guides him/her while interacting with the respondents. It offers the interviewer some important techniques to conduct the interview. Generally an interview guide emphasises on four important points- i) There is a difference between questions asked during interviews and research questions. ii) We start our research with one theory and end it with a different one. iii) Interview is a social activity. iv) The answers of the respondent are not evidences. If a researcher understands these facts then he can make a fruitful use of an interview guide. He must always remember that an interview is simply a method of data collection and cannot always answer solutions

to all our research problems. Hence an interview guide and a semi-structured method of interview are more often made use of by experienced researchers.

The following is a simple example of preparing an interview guide-

- Before starting the interview tell the respondent about yourself and why you are conducting the interview.
- Write down some general questions and issues that you would like to discuss. Add some sub-questions if required.
- Mark the important questions that you really need to have an answer to.
- Tell the respondent what you are going to do with the data collected.
- Take a copy of the interview guide to every interview and always write down the name and contact number of the respondent and date of the interview.
- If a translator is used during an interview, discuss with him/her how the key terms are going to be translated, so that there will not be any misinterpretation.

7.7 PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

An interview is a detailed and critical process of data collection. In order to organize a successful interview, a researcher has to keep in mind about his conduct before, during and after interview. This is a step by step process that can be discussed below :

- **Before Interview :** There are three important attributes that a researcher must develop before conducting the interview. These are:
  - **Development of personal qualities :** In order to be an ideal interviewer, a researcher needs to develop some personal qualities like honesty, right temperament, adaptability, interest, accuracy etc. These qualities will help him to conduct an effortless interview and also affects the willingness of the respondents.
  - **Training :** Training is an important aid that guides the researcher during interview. Organizational research often emphasises on

training the interviewers to make the interview fruitful. During training the researchers are taught important things such as how to prepare a questionnaire, select sample, the recording method, the importance of accuracy and objectivity and how to interact with the respondents.

- **Getting ready :** Before and during the interview is conducted, the researcher has to fulfil certain objectives like preparing the questionnaire if any, how to select and approach the respondents, choose the interview setting, explain the purpose and format of the interview, persuading the respondents to give accurate information, avoiding biasness and recording the accurate responses of the interviewees.

- **During Interview :** Developing a good rapport with the respondent is the first and most important task of the interviewer while conducting the interview. This will promote trust, understanding and cooperation. The interviewer should never be arrogant, he should never patronize the respondent or show disbelief to the responses. He should always start the interview by giving the respondent his personal information and the reason behind the research. Manipulation of the respondent only to get desired answers is unethical. So is being biased and subjective during the interview. That is why questions should always be asked in an impartial way. The interviewer should never mislead the respondent or force an answer from him/her. He should always record all the responses received, be it partial, inaccurate, irrelevant or non verbal. These records should always be objective.

- **After Interview :** Immediately after interview, the researcher should verify whether the interview was properly recorded or not. He should add additional notes to the respondent's answers such as name and contact information of the respondents, new information given by the respondents etc. And finally make preparations for proper analysis of the collected data.

7.8 DEVELOPING QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire development is a systematic process that goes through a number of steps which are:

- Issues to be covered
- Arrangement of the questions in a systematic and interrelated way
- Adding simple and easy to understand questions
- Preparing a draft questionnaire
- Analyse the draft questionnaire himself/herself
- Evaluation of the draft questionnaire by one or two colleagues or experts.
- Revising the draft questionnaire on the basis of the expert advice
- Conducting a pilot study
- Revising the questionnaire on the basis of the experiences of the pilot study.
- Preparing the final questionnaire



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What is an interview?

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Q.2: Mention two objectives of an interview.

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Q.3: What are the different classifications of interviews?

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Q.4: What is a structured interview?

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Q.5: What is an unstructured interview?

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Q.6: What is a semi-structured interview?

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Q.7: What is an interview guide? Why is an interview guide necessary in research?

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7.9 LET US SUM UP

- Interview is a very important aspect of research methodology and is the most common method of data collection.
- Interview is a technique where the interviewer asks questions to elicit information from the respondent. That is why it is a very personal and direct form of research.
- There are different types of interviews in terms of structure, role of the interviewer, number of respondents, and types of research which can be brought under three broad categories-Structured Interview, Unstructured Interview and Semi- Structured Interview.
- Structured interview is a technique of the interview process generally applied in quantitative research.
- In simple terms a structured interview is a method of collecting data for a statistical survey.
- The researcher prepares an interview schedule in which all respondents are asked the same questions with the same wording and in the same sequence. That is why it is also called formal interview or standardized interview.
- In a structured interview the interviewer must act in a neutral and objective manner so that he/she offers the same impression to all respondents and, in returns get un-biased answers to his/her questions.
- Unstructured interview is an interview process generally used in qualitative research methods.
- It is completely opposite to a structured interview and is a very flexible technique of interaction. The researcher engages in vigorous

conversation with the respondents to have a clear idea of the answer he/she seeks.

- In an unstructured interview, questions are not pre-arranged.
- Through an unstructured interview, a researcher can find out the "why" of a research problem.
- A Semi-structured interview is the most common among the techniques of the interview processes.
- In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer may prepare a list of questions but does not necessarily ask them all or in a particular order.
- This kind of interview is always dependent on an interview guide, which helps the researcher to interview different respondents in the manner most appropriate to gather information.
- It is a two-way communication where both the researcher and the respondent can ask and answer questions.
- An interview guide is a list of general topics to be covered by the interviewer while conducting the interview. It is a tool used during semi-structured interviews.
- Interview guides may be highly scripted or relatively loose but serve the same purpose.
- An interview guide is a planning on the part of the researcher that guides him/her while interacting with the respondents.



7.10 FURTHER READING

1) Ahuja, Ram (2001): *Research Methods,* Rawat Publications, New Delhi.

2) Chattopadhyay, Krichnadas & Sudarshana Sen (2013): *Rudiments of Social Research,* Levant Books, Kolkata.

3) Kothari, C. R. (2004): *Research Methodology – Methods and Techniques*, New Age International (P) Ltd, New Delhi.

7.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No 1: An interview is the verbal conversation between two people aiming at the collection of relevant information for the purpose of research. According to Good & Hatt, "Interview is a close face to face conversation or dialogue between the investigator or interviewer and the interviewee."

Ans to Q. No 2 : The two objectives of an interview

- To collect information about an existing problem in society
- To create a source of true, original and firsthand knowledge

Ans to Q. No 3 : There are three broad categories of interview, that are-

1. Structured Interview
2. Unstructured Interview
3. Semi- Structured Interview

Ans to Q. No 4 : Structured interview is a technique of the interview process generally applied in quantitative research. It is a method of collecting data for a statistical survey. A set of questions both close-ended and open-ended are asked to the respondent and recorded accordingly.

Ans to Q. No 5 : Unstructured interview is an interview process generally used in qualitative research methods. In an unstructured interview, questions are not pre-arranged. Generally the interviewer engages the respondent with open-ended questions as and when required.

Ans to Q. No 6 : Semi-structured interview depends on the instinct of the researcher. In such an interview, the interviewer may prepare a list of questions but does not necessarily ask them all or in a particular order.

Ans to Q. No 7 : An Interview Guide is a list of general topics to be covered by the interviewer while conducting the interview. An interview guide helps the researcher to direct the conversation towards the issues that he/she wants to learn about.

The necessities of an interview guide are:

a. It offers the interviewer some important techniques to conduct the interview.

b. It is very much helpful in a semi-structured interview.



7.13. MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1 : What is an interview? Discuss the objectives of an interview?

Q2 : Discuss the advantages and disadvantaged of structured interview?

Q3 : What is unstructured interview? How is it different from structured interview?

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1 : What is a semi-structured interview? Discuss the characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of a semi-structured interview?

Q2 : What is an Interview Guide? What is the process of preparing an Interview Guide?

Q3 : Discuss in detail the process of interview preparation.

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