UNIT 4 : RESEARCH METHODS

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4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- understand survey method,
- identify the characteristics of survey method and the steps involved in a survey,
- analyse Social and Economics Surveys,
- narrate the advantages and disadvantages of survey method,
- describe the concept of content analysis with special emphasis on its procedure and utility.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

Research has moved during this century from the periphery to the centre of our social and economic life. The term Research consists of two

4.3.2 Steps involved in a survey:

The following are the steps that have to be followed while making a survey:

1. Selection of a problem and its formulation: First the researcher has to fix the problem based on the literature review and formulate in a scientific and logical manner. While finding the problem, the researcher has to highlight the justification of the problem.
2. Preparation of the research design: After finding out the problem, the researcher has to design the research problem. While designing it, s/he has to have the knowledge of types of data and its availability, the source of data, study area, methods to be followed in the analysis and the expected results.
3. Operationalisation of the concepts and construction of measuring indexes and scales: While designing a research problem, researcher has to have clear idea about the concepts that are going to use in the research design. It is always better to link up your research design with theory and if not then have to highlight the probable policy implication of it. The concepts should be operationalized in such a way that you will have the idea of the variables that to be used and also the scales that are going to use to place them in quantitative or qualitative manner.
4. Sampling: Sampling is the method that is used to represent the whole population. Due to lack of either time or resources, you have to give your comment on your research problem for the whole population based on few observations. In that situation, you have to select those few observations in such a way that it is free from all biases and will represent your whole population. There are various methods of sampling and the researcher has to use one or more than one based on justification or requirement of the research design.
5. Construction of tools for collection of the data and their pre-test: After having decided about the types of data that are to be used in your research problem, it is necessary to frame either questionnaire or schedule to collect the primary data. Regarding the collection of secondary data, though there are no specific

variables and to assess the influence of various factors on some phenomenon like job satisfaction, labour productivity, and consumer behaviour. Surveys aiming at explanation involve in depth analysis and complex interpretations.

3. Survey may be designed to make comparison of the demographic group (comparison of low income groups with high income groups) or real groups, for e.g., work group in factories and offices. Comparison of behavioural or attitudinal group may also be made.
4. Survey concerned with cause and effect relationship can be useful for making predictions. For example, if relationship between increase in income and purchase of durable goods are established in a consumer behaviour survey, a prediction about future demand for durable goods with reference to anticipated increase in income can be made.

4.4 TYPES OF SURVEY

There are basically two types of survey-one is social survey and the other is economic survey.

4.4.1 Social Surveys

Social surveys are widely used in the field of social sciences.This type of survey is basically used to collect data on demographic characteristics and attitudes of residents of a particular area.Social surveys are associated with the following features-

1. Demographic characteristic of a group of people: It includes family composition, marital status, age and so on. Population census is primarily on the demographic aspect of the people.
2. Social environment of the people: It covers all social factors, housing conditions, and social norms, amenities, and social institutions.
3. People's attitude and opinions: It deals with various issues (direct and indirect elections of the head of the government), systems (democracy), and schemes of programmers (family planning).
4. People's behavior and activities: It refers to how people make

2. A sample survey is subject to sampling error. Its finding must be interpreted in the light of this error.
3. The survey method depends primarily on verbal behaviour. The respondent can give untrue or misleading answers. Hence a survey is subject to response error.
4. A survey is also subject to the measurement implicit in quantifying attitudes abilities, behaviour and other personal traits.
5. There is a limit of number of items of information that can be collected in a single survey. There is an optimal length of time for an interview. Beyond that point, interview weariness sets in. Hence, the extent of the data requirement should be limited to the tolerance level of respondent.
6. A sample survey design to represent a population over a wider geographical area may not give adequate representation to any population characteristics, which is highly localized. This means that the influence of specific local social groups cannot be assessed through a national survey.
7. The survey method is alone inadequate to analyze adequately the complex fabric of social organization. It is also not well suited to study the historical development.
8. Survey is very expensive from time to time. Hence an individual cannot afford to carry out an expensive survey out of his sources.

The above are the drawbacks of the survey method to consider when a person wants to apply this method in research.

4.6 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is another important method of research. In this method, written communication material is analyzed for identifying important elements or facts. B Berelson in 1959 defined content analysis as, 'It is a research technique for the objective system and quantitative description of the manifest of communication.' Content analysis is a research tool focused on the actual content. It is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters or sentences within texts and to quantify their presence in an objective manner. Content analysis is also considered as a method of data collection and analysis. This is used for collecting data from archival records, newspapers, diaries, letters, minutes

necessities of your research to guide your coding procedures.

There are many techniques of relational analysis available and this flexibility makes for it popular in various fields. Researchers can devise their own procedures according to the nature of their project. The process of relational analysis has achieved a high degree of computer automation but still is, like most forms of research, time consuming. Perhaps the strongest claim that can be made is that it maintains a high degree of statistical rigour without losing the richness of detail apparent in even more qualitative methods.

4.6.1 Procedure

Content analysis is a research method, which is different from other research methods. It is a specific form of descriptive method of research. Heman in 1968 has described the procedure of content analysis that included six steps which are as follows:

1. **Definition of unit analysis:** It is the first step of content analysis. Research has to delimit the area of the unit. The study is to be stated in few words or sentence. A unit is that aspect which can be studied independently. Heman has given clear definition of a unit of research. It can be understood with small structure.
2. **Marking frequencies:** The units are counted by researcher. These units are classified on some criterion. The frequencies are arranged category wise. The frequencies of each category are counted and units are noted category wise.
3. **Direction and depth:** In certain situation it is essential that the category of a unit is determined on the basis of direction and depth of the unit. Thus the frequencies of a unit are noted separately for direction and depth.
4. **Incidental events:** The purpose of incidental event is to discover the reference of genesis of the unit. A researcher thinks that communication in the unit is made in favour or against. It is only the way to have true communication of a unit.
5. **Sampling:** The sampling is the major problem of content analysis. The unit analyzed by the researcher must represent the whole content material. This situation or unit can help in generalization.



4.7 LET US SUM UP

- The term Research consists of two terms; Re- meaning again and again, and, Search- meaning to find out something. Therefore, Research means to observe a phenomenon again and again from different dimension.
- Survey is a" fact-finding" study. It is a research method involving collection of data directly from a population or a sample thereof at particular time. It requires expert and imaginative planning, careful analysis and rational interpretation of the finding.
- Data may be collected by observations, interviewing or mailing questionnaires.
- The quality of a survey depends upon the thoroughness of the planning, soundness of sampling, the adequacy and the reliability of the data, the quality of analysis and the interpretation of the finding.
- The purpose of many surveys such as population census, economic survey, expenditure survey, marketing survey, etc., is simply to provide information to government planners or business enterprises. These surveys have a descriptive purpose.
- Survey may be designed to make comparison of the demographic group (comparison of low income groups with high income groups) or real groups, for e.g., work group in factories and offices. Comparison of behavioural or attitudinal group may also be made.
- Survey concerned with cause and effect relationship can be useful for making predictions. For example, if relationship between increase in income and purchase of durable goods are established in a consumer behaviour survey, a prediction about future demand for durable goods with reference to anticipated increase in income can be made.
- There are basically two types of survey-one is social survey and the other is economic survey.
- Content analysis is a research tool focused on the actual content. It is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters or sentences within texts and to quantify their presence in an objective manner.

in an objective manner. Content analysis is also considered as a method of data collection and analysis. This is used for collecting data from archival records, newspapers, diaries, letters, minutes of meetings and the like. The content of written materials serves as a basis of inference. This analysis is made objectively and systematically. Content analysis is generally used in qualitative research and philosophical research.

Ans to Q No 3 : There are two general categories of content analysis - Conceptual Analysis and Relational Analysis

Ans to Q No 4 : Conceptual analysis is the most important category of content analysis. In conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for examination and the number of its occurrences within the text is recorded. Conceptual analysis begins with identifying research questions and choosing a sample or samples. Once chosen, the text must be coded into manageable content categories. The process of coding is basically one of selective reduction, which is the central idea in content analysis. By breaking down the contents of materials into meaningful and pertinent units of information, certain characteristics of the message may be analyzed and interpreted.In conceptual analysis, the researcher simply wants to examine presence with respect to his/her research question, i.e. whether there is a stronger presence of positive or negative words used with respect to a specific argument or respective arguments.

Ans to Q No 5 : Relational analysis builds on conceptual analysis by examining the relationships among concepts in a text and with other sorts of inquiry, initial choices with regard to what is being studied and/or coded for, often determines the possibilities of that particular study.There are many techniques of relational analysis available and this flexibility makes for it popular in various fields. Researchers can devise their own procedures according to the nature of their project. The process of relational analysis has achieved a high degree of computer automation but still is, like most forms of research, time consuming. Perhaps the strongest claim that can be made is that it maintains a high degree of statistical rigour without losing the richness of detail apparent in even more qualitative methods.