

# **POLI 344**

## **Methods of Political Research**

### **SESSION 6: FACE TO FACE AND ART OF INTERVIEW**

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# Face to face Method

## Introduction

The researcher uses many methods to collect data. One of these methods is the interview or the face to face method of collecting to collect data. This section will look at this method of data collection.

## The face to face or the personal interview

The face to face method involves interpersonal role situation in which an interviewer asks questions which are answered by a respondent or interviewee.

# Session 6

The questions are designed to obtain answers which are pertinent to the objectives of the research. The objectives of the personal interview are to

- To gain access to an objective situation
- To obtain an opportunity for observation
- To determine facts which vary from particular persons and situations
- To ascertain opinions, attitudes or trends in beliefs
- To check on questionnaire results



# Face to face Method

- Three types of interviews exist:
- The scheduled structured interview
- The non-scheduled structured interview
- The non-structured or non-directive interview

## **The scheduled structured interview**

In this type of interview the questions, their wording and their sequence are fixed and are identical for every respondent. This type of interview is based on three assumptions namely:

# Face to face Method

- That for any research objective the respondents have sufficient common vocabulary so that it is possible to formulate questions which have the same meaning for each of them.
- That it is possible to phrase all the questions in a form which is equally meaningful to each respondent.
- That if the meaning of each question is to be identical for each respondent, the context and the sequence of the questions must be identical.

# Face to face Method

- **The non-scheduled structured interview**
- This type of interview has four main characteristics:
- It takes place with the respondents who are known to have been involved in a particular experience
- It deals with situations that have been analyzed before or prior to the interview.
- It proceeds on the basis of an interview guide which specifies topics that are related to the research hypothesis/research questions.



# Face to face Method

- It is focused on the subjective experiences with regard to situations on the study.
- Although the encounter between the interviewer and the respondent is structured and the major aspects of the study are already spelt out, the respondent is given considerable liberty in expressing his/her views on the situation presented.

# Face to face Method

## **The non-directive interview**

In this type of interview, no pre-specified set of questions is used and the questions are not asked in any specified order. In addition, respondents are encouraged to relate their experiences and to describe whatever events seem significant to them. The interviewer also has a great deal of freedom to probe various areas and to raise specific queries in the course of the interview.



# Activity

Describe a face to face interview that you have been involved:

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# Summary

The interview or face to face method of data collection is a face to face interpersonal role situation in which an interviewer asks questions on a schedule which are answered by a respondent. The interview is conducted either with a schedule (set of questions on a questionnaire) or with a question guide and it may be structured or unstructured.



# The Art of Interview

## Introduction

Interviewing people is an art in itself and researchers do it along a set of rules. There is need to follow these rules as a researcher embarks on the face to face interview. This section looks at the art of interview.

## The Art of Interview

The interviewer's art consists in creating a situation in which the respondent's answers would be reliable and valid. The ideal situation must be a permissive environment in which the

# Requisites for Successful Interview

- respondent is encouraged to express his genuine frank opinions without fearing that his views would be revealed to others and without expression of any surprise or value-judgment by the interviewer.
- **Requisites for Successful Interview**
- The purpose of the interview situation is to achieve the following:
- To create a friendly atmosphere for a frank talk i.e. to establish a rapport.

# Requisites for Successful Interview

- To ask questions properly and intelligibly.
- To obtain valid and meaningful response
- To record the responses accurately and completely

The following are suggestions on dealing with these requisites:

- To deal with the first requisite, the researcher's introduction should be brief casual, positive and conversational. To achieve this, the researcher should have a mastery of the questions.

# Requisites for Successful Interview

He should also take all the opinions that are expressed without any show of surprise at the respondent's answers. He should also assume an interested posture towards the respondent's opinion but he should diverge his interests and should keep the direction of the interview in his own hands and endeavour to keep the respondent to the point.

To deal with the second requisite, the researcher (interviewer) should ask each question exactly as it is worded.

# Requisites for Successful Interview

He should not give an ad hoc explanation of questions since this would change the frame of reference or bias the response. The questions must be asked in the same order as they appear on the schedule (questionnaire). Finally the researcher should ask every question that have to be asked unless otherwise stated.

To deal with the third requisite, ensure that answers given are complete and when they are incomplete, just repeat the question with proper emphasis to get the proper answer.

# Requisites for Successful Interview

You need to be careful not to suggest a possible answer to a question i.e. avoid leading questions. Finally make sure all your all omissions are indicated e.g. if the respondent answers “do not know” or “not applicable” do state it verbatim.

To deal with the issue of recoding answers, it is relatively easy to record answers if the questions are pre-coded: e.g. Q1. Gender: 1. Male 2. Female

Q2. What was the cause of the student demonstration?

1. Poor food in dining hall



# Requisites for Successful Interview

2. Poor discipline of students
3. Poor teaching
4. Lack of adequate facilities

In some instances the questions are open-ended i.e. they are not pre-coded.

Q3. What was the outcome of the student demonstration?

If questions are open-ended, the interview is expected to be recorded verbatim. Researchers are to avoid errors and omission by inspecting each interview

# Advantages of the Personal Interview

schedule immediately after the interview.

## **Advantages of the Personal Interview**

The personal interview has some advantages going for it:

The information obtained is likely to be more accurate than information obtained by other techniques.

It is possible to do return visits to complete items on the schedule or in some cases to correct mistakes. In this case the response rate of questionnaires is far greater than when other methods are used.

# Advantages of the Personal Interview

Questions about which the respondent is likely to be sensitive can be carefully sandwiched in by the interviewer.

The language of the survey/interview can be adapted to the ability or the level of education of the respondent. It is therefore comparatively easy to avoid misrepresentation or misleading questions.

## **Limitations of the Personal Interview**

The personal interview has limitations. These include the following:

# Limitations of the Personal Interview

There are problems with high transportation cost and a good deal of time is required to go over the various addresses to be contacted.

There is the problem with human nature. The presence of the interviewer may distort the responses that may be received from the respondent e.g. if the interviewer has a certain background.

A rather complex organization is required for selecting, training and supervising a field staff of interviewees that is required for interviews done by other methods.

# Activity

State two problems you anticipate to encounter when you are conducting a personal interview:

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2.....  
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# Limitations of the Personal Interview

In the interview situation there are other problems that are introduced by the interviewer. These include:

**Interviewer Bias:** This is the systemic differences from the interviewer to the interview situation or systematic errors on the part of many or all interviewers. The bias may enter the project in two main areas (a) in the selection of the sample in the preparatory period. (b) in the interview situation, first in asking the questions and in the recording of responses. This kind of bias comes from three main sources:

# Limitations of the Personal Interview

**respondents' perception of the interviewer.** In such situation bias may occur which is difficult to erase due to social class, sex or age of the interviewer and the respondent. Studies have shown that the working class is influenced less in talking freely. There is the need for the interviewer to adopt an informal approach to the respondent. It is also advisable to interview respondents privately to avoid his/ views being influenced by the pressure of other people's pressure.

# Limitations of the Personal Interview

## **The Interviewer's Perception of Respondent:**

The interviewer may have strong expectations or prejudice. This might be due to the past experience of the interviewer.

## **Interviewer threat:**

If the Interviewer feels that the results are going to be a threat to his interest or position he might alter the whole interview.



# Limitations of the Personal Interview

In general the more responsibilities the interviewer is given for probing and evaluating his respondent's opinion, the more bias is likely to occur. The face to face interview is most suited for a target population which is non-literate or semi-literate such as farmers, market women and small and itinerant traders.



# Activity

Describe how you can introduce interviewer-bias into an interview situation:

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# Summary

The face to face interview allows the researcher to design a schedule of questions and sit face to face with a respondent to ask questions to secure valid responses for data. This method provides quality data but it has the problem of the interviewer influencing the responses from the respondent (interviewer bias). The face to face method assumes a respondent population of illiterate or semi-literates.



**THANK YOU**

