

# The Dynamics of Data Collection: A Generative Questionnaires

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# Dynamic of Data Collection

- Data Collection :
- The emphasis will be placed on questionnaires because most of the general issues of quantitative techniques can be illustrated with them.
- Questionnaires are very widely used in large scale investigations of political opinions and consumer preferences.
- Although they may seem simple to use and analyse, their design is by no means simple

# Questionnaire Layout

Although the formatting and layout of questionnaires may be considered something of an art, there are still some widely accepted principles of good practice. These includes:

1. Provide a short covering letter explaining the purpose of the research and why/how the respondents are selected.
2. Start the questionnaire with brief instructions about how to complete it
3. Vary the type of questions occasionally, but keep similar type of question together in bunches
4. Start with simpler factual questions, moving on later to items of opinion or values

# Questionnaire Design

To create a questionnaire that best captures the constructs you are trying to measure, keep in mind the following points.

1. What are you measuring?
2. Use clear and unambiguous language
3. Avoid leading questions
4. Avoid “double-barrelled” questions
5. Phrase some items in the reverse
6. Be consistent in response options

# What are you measuring?

- In creating items for the questionnaires, stay focus on the construct one attempt to measure. To ensure items are specific to the construct and could not be interpreted as referring to related constructs ( the **discriminant validity** problem).
- Also to ensure – important qualities of the contract are not omitted. This is concern with the **content validity** of the measure: the degree to which your measure captures the full range of your construct.
- Criticisms of content validity – about what has been left out of a measure

# Use clear and unambiguous language

- Should provide directions for the questionnaires, but expect a large percentage of the sample will either not read or read them briefly.
- To accommodate this tendency- should make the responses to the questionnaires items as simple and straightforward as possible.
- Avoid jargon – do not use terms that might be easily misunderstood. This especially important for psychological jargon ( e.g., *stereotype* and *prejudice* have very distinct meaning in social psychology.
- Use short, simple sentences

# Avoid leading questions

- Questions that suggest a particular response  
e.g., “What do you think of our delicious buffet?”
- In general do not use adjectives to modify the stimulus on participants
- Instead- present the stimulus in a neutral way

# Avoid “double-barrelled” questions

- Questions that ask about two separate issues but permit only one responds  
e.g., “Did you find our sales staff to be courteous and punctual?”  
What if the respondent believed the staff were courteous but not punctual?
- The word “and” in an item can be red flag that the item is double-barrelled.
- Similarly : Two questions in one item.



# Phrase some items in the reverse

- When phrase an item in the reverse- so that participants who strongly agreed with earlier items will strongly disagree with this one.
- Phrasing items in reverse does two things:
  1. It enables to detect **acquiescence bias** (also known as the **yes-saying bias**), the tendency to respond in an indiscriminately positive way
  2. It improves researcher's understanding of the construct by forcing to think its opposite

# Be consistent in response options

- The response options – in the questionnaires are the ways that the participants can respond to the prompts provided.
- The most common response option in psychological questionnaires is the Likert (pronounce LICK-ert) scale, which ask participants to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with a statement using scale that typically contains five to seven responds point.
- Given the complexity of items it is normally advisable to restrict the number items to about six. (Oppenheim, 1966)
- If possible keep the same response options throughout the questionnaires.
  - If use a 1-5 scale on page 1 and 1-9 scale on page 2 , some of the participants are likely to use 1-5 on page 2.

# Pretest

- Before give the questionnaires to participants – have one or two friends who are unfamiliar with the researcher's project take the questionnaire.
- Time how long it takes them - so will know what to tell participants.
- When they finished- ask them if any items were unclear or potentially problematic and make the necessary changes