

Lecture 03: Interviews**1. Interview Definition**

According to Burns (1997), ‘an interview is a verbal interchange, often face to face, though the telephone may be used, in which an interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs or opinions from another person’. That is, any person-to-person interaction, either face to face or otherwise, between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind is called an interview.

2. Types of Interview

When interviewing a respondent, you, as a researcher, have the freedom to decide the format and content of questions to be asked of your respondents, select the wording of your questions, decide the way you want to ask them and choose the order in which they are to be asked. This process of asking questions can be either very flexible, where you as the interviewer have the freedom to think about and formulate questions as they come to your mind around the issue being investigated, or inflexible, where you have to keep strictly to the questions decided beforehand – including their wording, sequence and the manner in which they are asked. There are three main types of interviews: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured.

2.1. Structured Interviews

Structured interviews are based on an interview schedule which is a list of predetermined questions that has been prepared by the investigator. Although interviews can yield both quantitative and qualitative data, structured interviews provide an organized instrument to elicit responses that are amenable to statistical analysis. Furthermore, according to Kumar (2011) structured interviews requires fewer interviewing skills than unstructured interviewing.

2.2. Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews provide a researcher complete freedom, the whole interview is more of a free-flowing conversation in which questions arise spontaneously. The latter constitutes a major advantage since the researcher can adapt the questions to the interviewees' answers and reactions. However, such a personalized approach to interviewing often results in asking participants different questions. Consequently, the process of evaluating answers would not be equal and less reliable. Furthermore, the nature of unstructured interviews is more helpful in qualitative research in which the aim is to divulge personal attitudes and opinions. Getting permission for an unstructured interview is also a major concern, participants can get skeptical and might well refuse to be interviewed and recorded if they do not know the questions beforehand.

2.3. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews combine the characteristic of both structured and unstructured interviews. An interviewer still prepares an interview schedule with pre-planned questions. Yet, the interviewer has the freedom also go off-script exploring spontaneously the topic with a candidate. Still, in semi-structured interviews, participants are not provided with sufficient information that would allow them to decide whether or not they want to take part in an interview.

References

Kumar, R. (2018). Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners. *Research methodology*.