

CHAPTER 2

Fundamentals of Survey Method

*Rasimah Che Mohd Yusoff, Sya Azmeela Shariff, Norziha Megat Mohd
Zainuddin, and Roslina Ibrahim*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

There are many different definitions of what constitutes a survey. A survey can be defined as “A systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purpose of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the large population of which the entities are members” (Joye et al., 2016). This definition aligned with Scheuren (2004) where the word survey is used most often to describe a method of gathering information from a sample of individuals. So, a survey can be described as a research strategy in which quantitative information is systematically collected from a relatively large sample taken from a population (Scheuren, 2004). Qualitative surveys provide depth explanation to reveal opinions, or narratives that may help to identify initial themes or issues that then explore further in the research.

This chapter is organized by firstly presenting overview on survey research in Section 2.2 while Section 2.3 describes the survey methods. Section 2.4 explains the advantages and disadvantages of survey methods. Section 2.5 discusses on the trends and issues of survey methods while Section 2.6 shows the implementation of survey methods. Finally, Section 2.7 of this chapter provides the conclusion/s drawn on this chapter.

2.2 SURVEY RESEARCH

Survey research is defined as “The collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions” (Check & Schutt, 2012). This type of research allows for a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation. Survey research can use quantitative research strategies (example using questionnaires with numerically rated items). For example, opinions can be measured by using Likert scales. This is an example of 5-point likert scale agreement:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

For qualitative research, typically the data are not presented in numerical form. Data in a qualitative research are usually in the form of words where researchers conduct observations or interviews. For example, the focus group’s facilitator would likely take notes during the discussion, which would then be converted into text and subjected to qualitative data analysis. In a survey research, researchers also might combine the quantitative and qualitative strategies which is known as mixed method research (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Johnson & Christensen, 2019). As it is often used to describe and explore human behaviour, surveys are therefore frequently used in social and psychological research (Dixon et al., 2016).

Survey research has historically included large population-based data collection. The primary purpose of this type of research was to obtain information describing the characteristics of a large sample of individuals and it is then inferred that the population has the same characteristics (Kothari, 2004). For example, a census obtains

information reflecting the demographic and personal characteristics for a population while customer feedback surveys to measure customers' satisfaction and loyalty. Unlike a census, where all members of the population are studied, surveys gather information from only a portion of a population of interest and the size of the sample depending on the size of population and purpose of the study (Scheuren, 2004; De Leeuw et al., 2012).

More recently, survey research has developed into a rigorous approach to research, with scientifically tested strategies detailing who to include (representative sample), what and how to distribute (survey method), and when to initiate the survey and follow up with no responders (reducing nonresponse error), in order to ensure a high-quality research process and outcome. Currently, the term "survey" can reflect a range of research aims, sampling and recruitment strategies, data collection instruments, and methods of survey administration (Ponto, 2015). To sum up, surveys provide an important source of basic scientific knowledge. For example, survey data can help the economists to study the income and expenditure patterns among households and health professionals can identify the implications of health problems on people's lives (Scheuren, 2004).

2.3 TYPE OF SURVEY METHODS

This chapter focuses on the process, instrument, or technique that researchers used to collect data that is representative of the group being surveyed which allows researchers to make informed decisions or draw conclusions. Depending on the purpose of the research a variety of survey methods might be used. Data for a survey can be gathered using any one or more of the following methods: survey questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and observation.