Year :2022 /2023

Level : Master1   **Prof :D.Mezaini**

Specific aims :

By the end of the lesson students will be able to :

- Identify the different types of the self report techniques.
- Understand the characteristics of the self report techniques.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of each type.

LESSON FIVE : SELF-REPORT TECHNIQUES

> Sometimes the most straightforward way of understanding why people behave in the way that they do is to ask them. This is the self-report method in psychology and it comprises questionnaires and interviews.
> A **self-report** simply means asking participants about something so they can report on it themselves. There are three main components to take into account:
> ● the specific **method** (questionnaire or interview) used to ask questions and gather data (the answers)
> ● the format or structure of the **questions** themselves
> ● the way in which participants will provide **answers** to the questions

Questionnaires

Questionnaires – not surprisingly – involve a pre-set list of written questions (or

items) to which the participant responds. Psychologists use questionnaires to assess

thoughts and/or feelings. A study may simply consist of a question to find out about the kind of dreams people have or a long list of items designed to assess an

individual's personality type.

A questionnaire may be used as part of an experiment to assess the **dependent**

variable. For example, whether views on the legalisation of specific recreational drugs are different in older and younger people.

How questions are asked in a **questionnaire** depends on what type of response or data the researcher is looking for. Data can be quantitative (in the form of numbers) or they can be qualitative (in the form of words). There are advantages and disadvantages to both these types of data .

We can ask **open-ended questions**, which are simply questions that ask the participant to give a response in his or her own words, with no pre-determined way to answer. **Closed questions**, on the other hand, require the participant to choose from a range of pre-determined answers. There are several forms of predetermined answer:

- a simple yes/no
- a choice from a range of categories such as 0–6, 7–12, 13–18 etc.
- a choice of number on a scale, with or without descriptor words at either end, such as:

strongly agree 1   2   3   4   5 strongly disagree

A rating scale like this is often known as a Likert scale and can be 5-point (as in the example above) or 7-point, or it could be 4-point. If a scale is 5-point, it gives the participant a chance to opt out, to be neutral. In the example above, the mid-point of the 5-point scale would be neutral or 'neither agree nor disagree'. This may well be the case depending on what question is asked. But what if every participant responded like this? There would be no useful data. Using a 4-point scale, with a fixed/forced choice, means the participant must commit to either agreeing or disagreeing. Think about the advantages and disadvantages of using each type of scale.

Questionnaires can be completed in a number of ways:

- by approaching a person and asking them to complete the questionnaire there and then
- by posting the questionnaire and asking for it to be returned
- by completing it online

Think about the advantages and disadvantages of these different ways in relation to:

- *Cost*: posting out a questionnaire and having it returned is relatively very expensive; asking people 'in the street' has no monetary cost at all.
- *Return of answers*: postal questionnaires take the most time because of postage and not every person will return the questionnaire immediately.
- *Target population*: a postal questionnaire can target specific individuals or it can cover a wide area; asking people in the street limits the sample. Completing a questionnaire online only targets people who are online and the sample may therefore be very restricted.
- *Question design*: asking 'in the street' means that questions need to be relatively short.

Interviews

Interviews can be:
● **structured**, where the questions are pre-prepared and every participant receives the same questions in the same order without variation
● **unstructured**, where there is no pre-preparation of questions and questions are asked depending on the direction in which the discussion goes, or questions are open-ended
● **semi-structured**, where there are some structured questions and some unstructured/open-ended questions.

An interview that is **face-to-face** is not anonymous and neither is a **telephone interview**, even if it is not face-to-face. A medical practitioner can conduct a clinical interview.

Advantages of self-reports

● Participants are given an opportunity to express a range of feelings and explain their behaviour.
● The data obtained may be 'rich' and detailed, especially with open questions.
● Data are often qualitative, but may also be quantitative depending on the types of question that are asked.
● Closed/forced-choice questions are easier to score/analyse.
● Relatively large numbers of participants can be questioned relatively quickly, which can increase representativeness and generalisability of the results.
● Questionnaires are relatively easy to replicate.

Disadvantages of self-reports

● Closed questions often do not give the participant the opportunity to say why they behaved or answered a question in a particular way.
● Participants might provide socially desirable responses, not give truthful answers or respond to demand characteristics.
● Closed/forced-choice questions might force people into choosing answers that do not reflect their true opinion, and therefore may lower the validity.
● Researchers have to be careful about the use of leading questions; it could affect the validity of the data collected.
● Open-ended questions can be time-consuming to categorise/analyse.
● If a telephone interview is conducted, a participant can easily withdraw, or might find it difficult to understand how to respond if the questions being asked cannot be seen.