**What is data collection?**

Data collection is a systematic method of collecting and measuring data gathered from different sources of information in order to provide answers to relevant questions. An accurate evaluation of collected data can help researchers predict future phenomenon and trends.

Data collection can be classified into two, namely: primary and secondary data. Primary data are raw data i.e. fresh and are collected for the first time. Secondary data, on the other hand, are data that were previously collected and tested.

**Methods of data collection**

The system of data collection is depends on the type of study being conducted or types of indictors that we are going to measure. Depending on data collection plan and design, there are several ways data can be collected.

The most commonly used methods are:

* Published literature sources,
* Surveys (email and mail),
* Interviews (telephone,
* Face-to-face or focus group),
* Observations, documents and
* Records, and experiments.

# Literature sources

This involves the collection of data from already published text available in the public domain. Literature sources can include: textbooks, government or private companies’ reports, newspapers, magazines, online published papers and articles.

This method of data collection is referred to as secondary data collection. In comparison to primary data collection, it is inexpensive and not time consuming.

# Surveys

Survey is another method of gathering information for research purposes. Information are gathered through questionnaire, mostly based on individual or group experiences regarding a particular phenomenon.

There are several ways by which this information can be collected. Most notable ways are: web-based questionnaire and paper-based questionnaire (printed form). The results of this method of data collection are generally easy to analyse.

# 3. Interviews

Interview is a qualitative method of data collection whose results are based on intensive engagement with respondents about a particular study. Usually, interviews are used in order to collect in-depth responses from the professionals being interviewed.

Interview can be structured (formal), semi-structured or unstructured (informal). In essence, an interview method of data collection can be conducted through face-to-face meeting with the interviewee(s) or through telephone.

# 4. Observations

Observation method of information gathering is used by monitoring participants in a specific situation or environment at a given time and day. Basically, researchers observe the behaviour of the surrounding environments or people that are being studied. This type of study can be controlled, natural or participant.

Controlled observation is when the researcher uses a standardised procedure of observing participants or the environment. Natural observation is when participants are being observed in their natural conditions. Participant observation is where the researcher becomes part of the group being studied.

# 5. Documents and records

This is the process of examining existing documents and records of an organisation for tracking changes over a period of time. Records can be tracked by examining call logs, email logs, databases, minutes of meetings, staff reports, information logs, etc.

For instance, an organisation may want to understand why there are lots of negative reviews and complains from customer about its products or services. In this case, the organisation will look into records of their products or services and recorded interaction of employees with customers.

# 6. Experiments

Experimental research is a research method where the causal relationship between two variables are being examined. One of the variables can be manipulated, and the other is measured. These two variables are classified as dependent and independent variables.