

**THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERVIEW FOR DATA COLLECTION IN LEGAL RESEARCH\***

**Abstract**

*This paper underscores the necessity of Interview as a vital method of data collection in legal research. The paper utilizes relevant statutes, treaties, textbooks, judicial precedents/case law. The paper is indispensable due to the scarcity of materials in the subject matter coupled with the attendant challenges faced by legal researchers using interview as a mode of data collection in legal research. There is compelling need to simplify and proffer solutions to those problems to ease research work. This paper lucidly examines nature of ethical consideration in legal research, importance of data collection, types of data collection in legal research, types of interview, characteristics, merits, demerits of interview, the practice of interview, and method of data collection in legal research. The findings of this paper are Interviews may be either structured or unstructured. Questionnaires will only be utilized where a certain amount is already known about the topic being studied. The depth interview enables the researcher to tackle sensitive embarrassing topics with the individual. Depth interviews are also useful when the decisions under study are complex. The paper concluded that Interview bias is mostly due to a lack of objectivity and or failure to administer questions properly. Focus group interviews entails small groups of persons who are encouraged to treat a topic and are restrained from straying from that topic by a moderator. It was recommended that Legal researchers should be more proactive in carrying out their research work, the universities, research institutions should vigorously teach law students and future researchers how to carry out their research work, interview as a means of data collection should be encouraged in the legal profession, law researchers should compulsorily frame their questionnaires in a manner, that they are relevant to the essence of the study.*

**Keywords:** Data, Ethical, Interview, Legal Research

**1. Introduction**

Research is defined as a systematic search for facts or scientific investigation of principles and facts of any subject, based on original and first-hand study of authorities or experiment.<sup>1</sup> It involves searching into a matter closely and carefully. It is an inquiry directed at the discovery of truth.<sup>2</sup> An interview is an answer to know and ascertain how to fit a man to the required job. An interview is beneficial to both the candidate and the organization, for it helps them to grow. This paper seeks to discuss the importance and ethical considerations of interview as a means of collecting data in legal research. This paper is handled in the following sequence: introduction, definition of interview, ethical consideration, data collection and legal research, nature of ethical consideration in legal research, importance of data collection in legal research, importance of ethical consideration in legal research, objectives of ethical consideration in legal research, types of data collection in legal research, objectives of interview, ethical consideration of interview as a measurement during collection of data. Other aspects of this paper includes characteristics of interview in legal research, types of interview, merits and demerits of interview in legal research, practice of interviewing, types of ethical consideration in legal research/ethical issues in research, method of data collection in legal research and conclusion.

**2. Conceptual Clarifications**

**Interview**

An interview is an answer to know and ascertain how to fit a man to the required job. An interview is beneficial to both the candidate and the organization, for it helps them to grow. An interview definition can be crafted as a gentle conversation between two people or more where questions are asked to a person to get the required responses or answers. According to Young, an interview is a scientific method through which a person enters into the life of a stranger. Good & Hatt: Interview a close face to face conversation or a dialogue between the investigator or interviewer and interviewee. It is a process of social interaction between interviewer and interviewee. For Kerlinger, it is a face to face interpersonal situation in which one asks

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<sup>1</sup> Worthley, B.A., 'Some Reflections on Legal Research after Thirty Years' Silver Jubilee of the Indian Law Institute Publication No. 7, Legal Research Methodology (1983), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ayua, I.A., 'Legal Research and Development' in Ayua, I.A. & Guobadia D.A. (eds), Law and Research Methodology (NIALS, Lagos, 2001), 42.

questions from the other to get answer about a social problem.<sup>3</sup> Usually two groups or two individuals sit facing each other in an interview. The person asking questions is the interviewer and the person answering the questions is the interviewee. An interview is a conversation for gathering information. A research interview involves an interviewer, who coordinates the process of the conversation and asks questions, and an interviewee, who responds to those questions. Interviews can be conducted face-to-face or over the telephone. The internet is also emerging as a tool for interviewing.<sup>4</sup>

Interviews consist of collecting data by asking question. It is a research method that involves the researcher asking questions and hopefully receiving answers from the respondents.<sup>5</sup> It is an interaction in which oral questions are posed by the interviewer to elicit response from the interviewee. Interview is not just asking and answering questions, it is beyond the oral aspect which the interviewer may observe the interviewee behaviour, personality, opinion, way of thinking and beliefs. This type of research method can elicit truth by observing the interviewee expression with the question he is being asked. The purpose of research interview is to explore the views, experience, beliefs of the individual participant on the information chosen. Interviews are also appropriate for exploring sensitive topics, where participant may not want to talk about sensitive issues especially where detailed insights are required.<sup>6</sup>

### **Ethical Considerations**

When it comes to dealing with human participants, research projects should rigorously follow ethical considerations. According to Cohen,<sup>7</sup> as interviews are considered an intrusion into respondents' private lives with regard to time allotted and level of sensitivity of questions asked; a high standard of ethical considerations should be maintained. Therefore, ethical issues should be considered at all stages of the interview process. That is, participants should provide their informed consent before participating in the interview: a key step that researchers should adhere to throughout the whole research project. However, an ethical challenge to researchers would be the openness and intimacy of the interview situation as it may lead respondents to disclose information that they may later regret, and there is a risk that the interaction may become a quasi-therapeutic relationship for which most researchers might not have been trained. Therefore, to protect the participants' rights and to avoid causing them any harm, researchers should assure that the collected data will be strictly confidential and anonymous. More importantly, however, participants should be told that their participation in the interview is entirely voluntary, and that they can withdraw at any time. With regard to my future research, appropriate consent forms will be designed; translated into Arabic (if needed); and distributed among the participants to sign. Furthermore, a brief explanation of my study's nature and the participants' rights will, concurrently, be distributed.<sup>8</sup>

Ethical Considerations can be specified as one of the most important parts of the research. Dissertations may even be doomed to failure if this part is missing. i. Research participants should not be subjected to harm in any ways whatsoever, ii. Respect for the dignity of research participants should be prioritized, iii. Full consent should be obtained from the participants prior to the study, iv. The protection of the privacy of research participants has to be ensured, v. Adequate level of confidentiality of the research data should be ensured, vi. Anonymity of individuals and organisations participating in the research has to be ensured, vii. Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research must be avoided, viii. Affiliations in any forms, sources of funding, as well as any possible conflicts of interests have to be declared, ix. Any type of communication in relation to the research should be done with honesty and transparency. Any type of misleading information, as well as representation of primary data findings in a biased way must be avoided.<sup>9</sup>

### **Legal Research**

Legal research is a systematic search for information on a specific field or area of law.<sup>10</sup> Research instruments are the tools for data collection. There are two main methods of doing this which are; i. Survey Methods ii.

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<sup>3</sup> Study Lecture Notes, What is Interview method, Definition & objectives., available at <http://studylecturenotes.com/what-is-interview-method-definition-objectives/>

<sup>4</sup> Easwaramoorthy, M & Fataneh Zarinpoush, Interviewing for Research, Canada Volunteerism Initiative available at <https://www.coursehero.com/file/52484428/tipsheet6-interviewing-for-research-en-0pdf/>

<sup>5</sup> Khushal R., and Filipos A., 'Legal Research Methods Teaching Materials', prepared under the Sponsorship of the Justice and Legal System Research Institute, 2009, 162.

<sup>6</sup> Silverman D., 'Doing Qualitative Research', London: Sage Publications, 2000. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morison, K., *Research Methods in Education*. (6th ed.). (London: Routledge, 2007), 65.

<sup>8</sup> Hamza Alshenqeeti, Interviewing as a Data Collection Method: A Critical Review, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/elr.v3n1p39>.

<sup>9</sup> Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2007) 'Business Research Methods', 2nd edition. Oxford University Press.. 54.

<sup>10</sup> Hunchinson T, *Research and Writing in Law*, 3rd edition, Lawco, Australia, 2010 at 20

Non-Survey Methods. The survey method is one which entails direct contact between the researcher and the subject, during which the researcher asks questions which are answered by the subject. The non-survey method on the other hand is one in which data is collected about subject without necessarily asking them questions and without necessarily involving any direct contact between the researcher and the subject. Our focus in this paper is on the survey method of data collection. It is notable however that non-survey data collection method includes; Experiments, Observation, Case studies, and Document Studies.<sup>11</sup> The survey method of data collection is achieved through the administration of two main types of instruments, namely; the questionnaire and the Interview Schedule. Our main focus here is to examine the use of interviews and questionnaire as research instruments. Obviously, these two tools fall within the category of non-doctrinal research also known as empirical research as both instruments involve the collection of fact and data from the target audience. It is intended to treat the two instruments separately here, and then compare the two subsequently.<sup>12</sup>

### **3. Importance of Data Collection in Legal Research**

There are a bunch of underlying reasons for collecting data, especially for a researcher. Walking you through them, here are a few reasons:

**Integrity of The Research:** A key reason for collecting data, be it through quantitative or qualitative methods, is to ensure that the integrity of the research question is indeed maintained.

**Reduce the likelihood of errors:** The correct use of appropriate data collection of methods reduces the likelihood of errors consistent with the results.

**Decision Making:** To minimize the risk of errors in decision making, it is important that accurate data is collected so that the researcher doesn't make uninformed decisions.

**Save Cost and Time:** Data collection saves the researcher time and funds that would otherwise be misspent without a deeper understanding of the topic or subject matter.

**To support a need for a new idea, change and/or innovation:** To prove the need for a change in the norm or the introduction of new information that will be widely accepted, it is important to collect data as evidence to support these claims.

### **4. Importance of Ethical Consideration in Legal Research**

- i. It promotes authentic, original and true knowledge by avoiding error such as falsifying, fabrication and misrepresentation of data which can alter a real scenario such as the degree of economic development of a nation.
- ii. It promotes values of collaborative work by maintaining governmental and university policies on human subject protection and animal care. This will guarantee the researcher's accountability towards public.
- iii. It promotes Public accountability. The researcher can gain public support for funding his/her study (e.g. on genes or rare medicine), which otherwise requires huge finances and time.
- iv. It aims at maintenance of quality and integrity along with moral and social values like, social responsibility, human rights, legal compliance, animal welfare, public health & safety, etc. Researchers put lives at risk when they fabricate data in the study of medicine. Furthermore, if a researcher discloses information of their AIDS subjects without their discrete can lead to mental or physical stress.<sup>13</sup>

### **5. Objectives of Ethical Consideration in Legal Research**

**Honesty and Integrity:** This means that you need to report your research honestly, and that this applies to your methods (what you did), your data, your results, and whether you have previously published any of it. You should not make up any data, including extrapolating unreasonably from some of your results, or do anything which could be construed as trying to mislead anyone. It is better to undersell than over-exaggerate your findings. When working with others, you should always keep to any agreements, and act sincerely.

**Objectivity:** You should aim to avoid bias in any aspect of your research, including design, data analysis, interpretation, and peer review. For example, you should never recommend as a peer reviewer someone you know, or who you have worked with, and you should try to ensure that no groups are inadvertently excluded

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<sup>11</sup> Soyombo, Omololu, 'Selection of Research Instruments, Questionnaire, Design and Administration' In Readings in Law and Research Methodology, I.A.Ayua and D.A. Guobadia (eds.) Lagos, Nigeria: Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. 2001. 103.

<sup>12</sup> Micheal S Afolayan & Omolade A Oniyinde (Phd), Interviews and Questionnaires as Legal Research Instruments, Journal of Law, Policy and Globalisation, <http://10.7176/JLPG/83-08>

<sup>13</sup> Smith, D., 2003. Five principles for research ethics. *Monitor on Psychology*, 34(1), p.56. Available at: <http://www.apa.org/monitor/jan03/principles.aspx>

from your research. This also means that you need to disclose any personal or financial interests that may affect your research.

**Carefulness:** Take care in carrying out your research to avoid careless mistakes. You should also review your work carefully and critically to ensure that your results are credible. It is also important to keep full records of your research. If you are asked to act as a peer reviewer, you should take the time to do the job effectively and fully.

**Openness:** You should always be prepared to share your data and results, along with any new tools that you have developed, when you publish your findings, as this helps to further knowledge and advance science. You should also be open to criticism and new ideas.

**Respect for Intellectual Property:** You should never plagiarize, or copy, other people's work and try to pass it off as your own. You should always ask for permission before using other people's tools or methods, unpublished data or results. Not doing so is plagiarism. Obviously, you need to respect copyrights and patents, together with other forms of intellectual property, and always acknowledge contributions to your research. If in doubt, acknowledge, to avoid any risk of plagiarism.

**Confidentiality:** You should respect anything that has been provided in confidence. You should also follow guidelines on protection of sensitive information such as patient records.

**Responsible Publication:** You should publish to advance to state of research and knowledge, and not just to advance your career. This means, in essence, that you should not publish anything that is not new, or that duplicates someone else's work.

**Legality:** You should always be aware of laws and regulations that govern your work, and be sure that you conform to them.

**Animal Care:** If you are using animals in your research, you should always be sure that your experiments are both necessary and well-designed. You should also show respect for the animals you are using, and make sure that they are properly cared for.

**Human Subjects Protection:** If your research involves people, you should make sure that you reduce any possible harm to the minimum, and maximise the benefits both to participants and other people. This means, for example, that you should not expose people to more tests than are strictly necessary to fulfil your research aims. You should always respect human rights, including the right to privacy and autonomy. You may need to take particular care with vulnerable groups, which include, but are not limited to children, older people, and those with learning difficulties.<sup>14</sup>

## **6. Types of Data Collection in Legal Research**

Data are organized into two broad categories: qualitative and quantitative.

**Qualitative Data:** Qualitative data are mostly non-numerical and usually descriptive or nominal in nature. This means the data collected are in the form of words and sentences. Often (not always), such data captures feelings, emotions, or subjective perceptions of something. Qualitative approaches aim to address the 'how' and 'why' of a program and tend to use unstructured methods of data collection to fully explore the topic. Qualitative questions are open-ended. Qualitative methods include focus groups, group discussions and interviews. Qualitative approaches are good for further exploring the effects and unintended consequences of a program. They are, however, expensive and time consuming to implement. Additionally the findings cannot be generalized to participants outside of the program and are only indicative of the group involved. Qualitative data collection methods play an important role in impact evaluation by providing information useful to understand the processes behind observed results and assess changes in people's perceptions of their well-being. Furthermore qualitative methods can be used to improve the quality of survey-based quantitative evaluations by helping generate evaluation hypothesis; strengthening the design of survey questionnaires and expanding or clarifying quantitative evaluation findings. These methods are characterized by the following attributes –

- i. They tend to be open-ended and have less structured protocols (i.e., researchers may change the data collection strategy by adding, refining, or dropping techniques or informants);
- ii. They rely more heavily on interactive interviews; respondents may be interviewed several times to follow up on a particular issue, clarify concepts or check the reliability of data;
- iii. They use triangulation to increase the credibility of their findings (i.e., researchers rely on multiple data collection methods to check the authenticity of their results);
- iv. Generally, their findings are not generalizable to any specific population; rather each case study produces a single piece of evidence that can be used to seek general patterns among different studies

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<sup>14</sup> Resnick, D. B, *What is Ethics in Research and Why is it Important?* List adapted from Shamoo A and Resnik D., *Responsible Conduct of Research*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

of the same issue.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of the kinds of data involved, data collection in a qualitative study takes a great deal of time. The researcher needs to record any potentially useful data thoroughly, accurately, and systematically, using field notes, sketches, audiotapes, photographs and other suitable means. The data collection methods must observe the ethical principles of research. The qualitative methods most commonly used in evaluation can be classified in three broad categories – a) In-depth interview; b) Observation methods; c) Document review.

**Quantitative Data:** Quantitative data is numerical in nature and can be mathematically computed. Quantitative data measure uses different scales, which can be classified as nominal scale, ordinal scale, interval scale and ratio scale. Often (not always), such data includes measurements of something. Quantitative approaches address the ‘what’ of the program. They use a systematic standardized approach and employ methods such as surveys and ask questions. Quantitative approaches have the advantage that they are cheaper to implement, are standardized so comparisons can be easily made and the size of the effect can usually be measured. Quantitative approaches however are limited in their capacity for the investigation and explanation of similarities and unexpected differences. It is important to note that for peer-based programs quantitative data collection approaches often prove to be difficult to implement for agencies as lack of necessary resources to ensure rigorous implementation of surveys and frequently experienced low participation and loss to follow up rates are commonly experienced factors. The Quantitative data collection methods rely on random sampling and structured data collection instruments that fit diverse experiences into predetermined response categories. They produce results that are easy to summarize, compare, and generalize. If the intent is to generalize from the research participants to a larger population, the researcher will employ probability sampling to select participants. Typical quantitative data gathering strategies include–

- i) Experiments/clinical trials;
- ii) Observing and recording well-defined events (e.g., counting the number of patients waiting in emergency at specified times of the day);
- iii) Obtaining relevant data from management information systems;
- iv) Administering surveys with closed-ended questions (e.g., face-to face and telephone interviews, questionnaires etc);
- v) In quantitative research (survey research), interviews are more structured than in Qualitative research. In a structured interview, the researcher asks a standard set of questions and nothing more. Face -to -face interviews have a distinct advantage of enabling the researcher to establish rapport with potential participants and therefore gain their cooperation;
- vi) Paper-pencil-questionnaires can be sent to a large number of people and saves the researcher time and money. People are more truthful while responding to the questionnaires regarding controversial issues in particular due to the fact that their responses are anonymous.<sup>16</sup>

## **7. Objectives of Interview**

The objectives of interviews include:

- i). It helps to verify the information provided by the candidate. It helps to ascertain the accuracy of the provided facts and information about the candidate.
- ii) What the candidate has written in the resume are the main points. What other additional skill set does he have? All these are known by conducting interviews.
- iii) It not only gives the interviewer information about the candidate’s technical knowledge but also gives an insight into his much needed creative and analytical skills.
- iv) Helps in establishing the mutual relation between the employee and the company,
- v) It is useful for the candidate so that he comes to know about his profession, the type of work that is expected from him and he gets to know about the company.
- vi) An interview is beneficial for the interviewer and the interviewee as individuals, because both of them gain experience, both professionally and personally.
- vii) It helps the candidate assess his skills and know where he lacks and the places where he needs improvement.
- viii) The interview also helps the company build its credentials and image among the employment seeking candidates.
- ix) Collect information’s about an existing social problem
- x) Create relation between interviewer and interviewee

<sup>15</sup>Kabir, S. M. S., *Basic Guidelines for Research: An Introductory Approach for All Disciplines*. Book Zone Publication, ISBN: 978-984-33-9565-8, (Chittagong-4203, Bangladesh, 2016). <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325846997>

<sup>16</sup> ibid

- xi) Gain inner feelings of the respondent
- xii) Create a source of knowledge
- xiii) Provide rich hypothesis
- xiv) Reduce the distance between human beings
- xv) Observe the situation quickly
- xvi) Collect additional information's xvii) Draw quantitative facts
- xviii) Gain new knowledge about an area.

## **8. Ethical Considerations of Interview as a Measurement/During Collection of Data**

**Privacy and confidentiality:** Interviews can delve into areas unanticipated at the outset. Furthermore, there is a danger of voyeurism and the temptation to focus on the most sensational elements of a study.<sup>17</sup> There is a particular issue with 'dyadic' inquiry, as in the case of using interviews to study issues between careers and those they care for and of using interviews to study family relationships Here privacy is threatened when the interviewer probes into areas that at least one interviewee would prefer to keep private. Confidentiality is threatened when the interviews reveal details between the pair that were previously secret. Confidentiality is the most common threat identified in this writing up. Whilst individuals may not be identifiable to the general public, they may well be identifiable to, say, the peers also involved in the study. Some papers discuss instances when a researcher ought to breach confidentiality in the public interest. Others consider the related issue of researchers' legal or professional duties when protecting confidentiality where a crime is reported or witnessed.<sup>18</sup>

**Informed consent:** Informed consent is extensively examined. The issues of privacy and confidentiality are identified as reasons for its particular importance in interview research. Whilst it is desirable for the participant to know the privacy and confidentiality 'rules' before agreeing to the interview, the privacy issue suggests that this cannot be entirely assured. Therefore, some authors recommend a model of continuous or process consent, where the researcher Ethics reaffirms consent throughout the research process. In an interview this requires judgment: 'Is it alright if we talk a little more about that?' This model of consent has been discussed in other contexts and is not without problems. For example, there is a danger of participants being drawn into the research on partial information and then feeling obliged to continue. The process model of consent is used in at least one case. Some papers identify the difficulty of obtaining informed consent where the interviewees are from vulnerable groups.<sup>19</sup>

**Harm:** Many interviews concern issues that are sensitive; this can make interviews emotionally intense. They might potentially harm both interviewees and interviewers. Bereavement research is a particular example. A more prosaic (but important) potential harm is to physical safety, particularly in some contexts such as interviewing homeless youths or research into domestic violence. Many researchers set potential harm against possible therapeutic benefit they have either noted or systematically investigated. However, other studies raise doubts about this therapeutic benefit. Sinding and Aronson point to the danger of exposing interviewees self-perceived failures in, for example, providing end-of-life care.<sup>20</sup> Their discussion brings out two important issues. One is the desire of interviewers to minimize hurt through, what they term 'consoling refrains'. The other issue is more political: as feminists, the researchers say they have a desire to 'unsettle the accommodations' women have to make in their lives; they want their research to expose problems and be part of the movement to change society. The issue of 'consoling refrains' is discussed by a number of researchers. There may be tension here: if interviews have the potential to harm or be therapeutic, and if researchers generally desire that they are the latter, then researchers may be tempted to switch from research to therapy when conducting interviews.<sup>21</sup>

**Dual role and over-involvement:** Just as interviews may have a dual end of information and therapy, so the researcher may take on a dual role as scientist and therapist. At its simplest, the researcher wants to protect the participant from harm. She may, therefore, try to bolster his self-esteem or put a positive interpretation

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<sup>17</sup> Brinkmann S, & Kvale S. Confronting the Ethics of Qualitative Research. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*;18(2), (2005), 157-81

<sup>18</sup> Cashmore J. Ethical Issues Concerning Consent in Obtaining Children's Reports on their Experience of Violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*;30(9), (2006), 969-77

<sup>19</sup> Byrne M. The concept of Informed Consent in Qualitative Research. *AORN Journal*: 74(3), (2001), 401-403.

<sup>20</sup> Sinding, C., & Aronson J. (2003). Exposing Failures, Unsettling Accommodations: Tensions in Interview Practice. *Qualitative Research*; 3(1):95-117.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

on described events. More ambiguously, the researcher wants to obtain good quality material. In doing this she may use the techniques of counseling in order to draw out the participant. Finally, the researcher may have another role, such as social worker or nurse. She may find herself drawn into that role and away from that of researcher during an in-depth interview. Aside from this, the researcher may simply find herself over-involved with the participant, although the researcher who reports having sex with a participant must surely be an extreme case. By contrast, Tillmann-Healy's discussion suggests that at least some degree of involvement, she says friendship, is desirable, perhaps necessary, in this type of research. Tillmann-Healy goes on to ask, though, how can one develop such a relationship with a participant whom one dislikes or even one who seems morally reprehensible example of a murderer.

**Politics and power:** At the outset, the participant may feel obliged to take part in the interview because of the relationship he has with the interviewer. For example, during the interview, the interviewer has some power over the direction of conversation. The participant may be drawn to discuss issues he would rather have kept silent about. Furthermore, he may be misled by the apparent counselling methods of the interviewer; as such, he may, for example, feel disappointed by the lack of therapeutic intent revealed later. In the later stages of the research process, the interviewer usually has control of which quotes are used, how they are used and how they are interpreted. Participants can feel misrepresented perhaps especially where interpreters are used. Comments on the politics of interviews are sparser, although it is an issue identified by feminists who often refer to Oakley's work as a precursor. In following Oakley, the feminist researcher would seek to be on the woman's side in the interview; this position would contrast with someone who viewed the interviewer's role as neutral and related to data collection only

### **9. Characteristics of Interview in Legal Research**

- i) The participants, that is, the interviewer and the respondents are strangers. Thus, the investigator has to get himself introduced to the respondent in an appropriate manner.
- ii) The relationship between the participants and the interviewer is a transitory one. It has a fixed beginning and terminating points.<sup>22</sup>
- iii) Interview is not a mere casual conversational exchange, but a conversation with a specific purpose, which include obtaining information relevant to a study.
- iv) Interview is a mode of obtaining verbal answers to questions put verbally.
- v) The interaction between the interviewer and the respondent need not necessarily be on a face to face basis because interviews can be conducted over the telephone also.<sup>23</sup>
- vi) Interview is not limited to a single respondent; it can also be conducted with a group of persons.

### **10. Types of Interviews**

An interview is generally a qualitative research technique which involves asking open-ended questions to converse with respondents and collect elicited data about a subject. The interviewer in most cases is the subject matter expert who intends to understand respondent opinions in a well-planned and executed series of questions and answers. Interviews are similar to focus groups and surveys when it comes to garnering information from the target market but are entirely different in their operation – focus groups are restricted to a small group of 6-10 individuals whereas surveys are quantitative in nature. Interviews are conducted with a sample from a population and the key characteristic they exhibit is their conversational tone. There are three major types of interviews, they are; Fully-Structured interview, Semi-Structured Interview and Unstructured Interview.<sup>24</sup>

*The Fully-Structured Interview:* This is sometimes called a standardised interview. This is an interview made with a detailed standardized schedule. The same questions are put to all respondents and in the same order. The standardisation of the question enhances comparison between respondent's answers and the questions are usually very specific and often the interviewee has a fixed range of answers.<sup>25</sup> The fully-structured interview is similar to questionnaire method. The difference between the two is that in structured interview, the questions are asked verbally.

<sup>22</sup> Silverman D., 'Doing Qualitative Research', London: Sage Publications, 2000, Pg. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Kvale S., 'Interviews' Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications 1996, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Khushal R., and Filipos A., 'Legal Research Methods Teaching Materials', prepared under the Sponsorship of the Justice and Legal System Research Institute, 2009. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Britten N., 'Qualitative interviews in Healthcare' In Pope C. & Mays N., (eds.) Qualitative Research in Healthcare, 2nd ed., London: BMY Books, 1999, 11-19

*Sample*

If you were to consider the level of your education would you say you are happy or unhappy with yourself?

Very happy

Fairly happy

Not very happy

Not at all happy

Can't choose

Structured interviews are defined as research tools that are extremely rigid in their operations and allow very little or no scope of prompting the participants to obtain and analyze results. It is thus also known as a standardized interview and is significantly quantitative in its approach. Questions in this interview are pre-decided according to the required detail of information. Structured interviews are excessively used in survey research with the intention of maintaining uniformity throughout all the interview sessions. They can be closed-ended as well as open-ended – according to the type of target population. Closed-ended questions can be included to understand user preferences from a collection of answer options whereas open-ended can be included to gain details about a particular section in the interview.

*The Semi-structured Interview:* This type of interview has predetermined questions but the questions wording can be modified subject to the discretion of the interviewer, especially where the questions seem to be inappropriate with a particular interviewee. Ability to change the wordings makes it flexible and this gives some control over the interview to the interviewee. It also allows the interviewer to probe the interviewee<sup>26</sup> since the subject area are predetermined and known to the interviewer, it enables him to ask relevant questions to elicit adequate information necessary on the subject area. This type of interview is often used in radio and television interviews. Semi-structured interviews offer a considerable amount of leeway to the researcher to probe the respondents along with maintaining basic interview structure. Even if it is a guided conversation between researchers and interviewees – an appreciable flexibility is offered to the researchers. A researcher can be assured that multiple interview rounds will not be required in the presence of structure in this type of research interview. Keeping the structure in mind, the researcher can follow any idea or take creative advantage of the entire interview. Additional respondent probing is always necessary to garner information for a research study. The best application of semi-structured interview is when the researcher doesn't have time to conduct research and requires detailed information about the topic.<sup>27</sup>

*The Unstructured Interview:* This type of interview does not make use of any detailed pre-planned schedule or structure. It is the most flexible type of interview. The interviewer encourages the respondent to talk freely and extensively about a given topic with a minimum guidance. There is more freedom in the interaction of both the interviewer and the respondent(s). The limitation in this area is that the responses may not be comparable since questions asked of different interviewees will be different and the questions would have been framed in different ways since they are not standardised.<sup>28</sup> For example, talking about satisfaction, are you satisfied with your life? Also called as in-depth interviews, unstructured interviews are usually described as conversations held with a purpose in mind – to gather data about the research study. These interviews have the least number of questions as they lean more towards a normal conversation but with an underlying subject. The main objective of most researchers using unstructured interviews is to build a bond with the respondents due to which there are high chances that the respondents will be 100% truthful with their answers. There are no guidelines for the researchers to follow and so, they can approach the participants in any ethical manner to gain as much information as they possibly can for their research topic.

## **11. Methods of Research Interviews**

There are three methods to conduct a research interview, each of which is peculiar in its application and can be used according to the research study requirement. Respondents should be informed about the study details before an interview takes place. Ideas of what is expected from the interview must be made known to him beforehand. This forms a fundamental aspect of the informed consent process.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> Soyombo O., 'Selection of Research Instruments, Questionnaire, Design and Administration' In Readings in Law and Research Methodology, I.A. Ayua and D.A. Guobadia (eds.) Lagos, Nigeria: Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. 2001. 103.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> Britten N., 'Qualitative interviews in Healthcare' In Pope C. & Mays N., (eds.) Qualitative Research in Healthcare, 2nd ed., London: BMY Books, 1999., 11-19



**Personal Interviews:** Personal interviews are one of the most used types of interviews, where the questions are asked personally directly to the respondent. For this, a researcher can have *a guide online survey* to take note of the answers. A researcher can design his/her survey in such a way that they take notes of the comments or points of view that stands out from the interviewee.

**Telephonic Interviews:** Telephonic interviews are widely used and easy to combine with online surveys to carry out research effectively.

**Email or Web Page Interviews:** Online research is growing more and more because consumers are migrating to a more virtual world and it is best for each researcher to adapt to this change. The increase in people with Internet access has made it popular that interviews via email or web page stand out among the types of interviews most used today. For this nothing better than an online survey. More and more consumers are turning to online shopping, which is why they are a great niche to be able to carry out an interview that will generate information for the correct decision making.

## 12. Merits of Interview in Legal Research

- i. Interview is flexible and adaptable to individual situations. Interviews give researchers the opportunity to repeat or reframe questions where the Respondents are not getting the questions right.
- ii. There is opportunity to probe, to encourage more complete and better explained responses.
- iii. There is opportunity to explain or clarify questions and this increases the accuracy of the data collected.
- iv. Interview is useful for gaining insight and context into a topic.
- v. It allows for more control over the order and flow of questions.
- vi. It tends to bring a higher response rate than the questionnaire. The interviewer can use the benefit of his/her presence to persuade respondents to cooperate.<sup>30</sup>
- vii. There is total control over the environment. The interviewer can ensure that the interview is conducted in private such that no other person may constitute bias to the response of the respondent.
- viii. It increases the knowledge of both the interviewer and the interviewee. They can interchange their views and ideas.
- ix. Sufficient information can be collected through the interview process

## 13. Demerits of Interview in Legal Research

- i. Time Consuming – time constraint is one of the major limitations of the interview process. Preparation for the interview, taking the interviews and interpretation of the responses requires more time.
- ii. Costly- interview method is expensive.
- iii. Not suitable for personal matters as interviewee may not reveal his personal matters.
- iv. It is susceptible to interview bias. There is possibility that the interview process can be influenced by the biases of the interviewer sometimes.
- v. Lack of proper training of the Interviewer may affect the quality of the interview. The interviewer may not have good knowledge of the subject matter.

## 14. Types of Ethical Consideration in Legal Research/ Ethical Issues in Research

### Ethical issues related to research

A researcher must be cautious in revealing his or her research findings if they may impede the good working relations of his or her sponsor. This is evident if the information focuses on the policies of the organization and could reveal sensitive matters of the people or organization. This calls for the need to collaborate well with other researchers and yet uphold the intellectual rights of the researchers. If this is not well adhered to, it could lead to rebellion or even protests.<sup>31</sup>

**Academic freedom:** Academicians are expected to be open minded and share their information and ideas freely without fear or intimidation yet observing the need to protect intellectual property.<sup>32</sup>

**Fabrication and Falsification or fraud:** Fabrication involves creating, inventing or faking data or results which are then recorded or reported while, falsification or fraud is the manipulation of materials, equipment,

<sup>30</sup> Soyombo O., 'Selection of Research Instruments, Questionnaire, Design and Administration' In Readings in Law and Research Methodology, I.A.Ayua and D.A. Guobadia (eds.) Lagos, Nigeria: Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. 2001. 103.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen I. Akaranga & Brett K Makau, Ethical Considerations and their Applications to Research: a Case of the University of Nairobi, Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research, www.ztjournals.com.

<sup>32</sup> Mugenda A.G., *Social Science Research Methods: Theory and Practice*, (ARTS Press: Nairobi, 2011).

processes, by changing results or omitting some data or findings so that the research does not seem to have been well represented or recorded.<sup>33</sup> Any researcher who is involved in such a practice violates the primary objective of research ethics which renders him or her untrustworthy and could mislead other scholars, while at the same time undermining their own academic authority. This is prevalent if the researcher or researchers misuse their privilege and abuse the power bestowed upon them for their benefit at the expense of the vulnerable subjects.<sup>34</sup>

**Financial issues and sponsorship:** Research is a delicate but rigorous endeavour which calls upon thorough presentation and analysis of information. Hence, researchers should be held accountable to the public and must seek for financial support and sponsorship because a research study should be thoroughly undertaken. But, in some cases, the research findings could be compromised by the funding organization which does not fully support the research financially and instead strives to save money thus impacting on the quality of the study. This definitely leads to hurried research and distorted findings.<sup>35</sup> Such studies could be a waste of money or is of no value or impact on the consumers. Some research studies are even conducted under the guidance of a sponsor/s who specifies their needs or demands. In one way, this could lead to non-compliance or non-conformity.

**Plagiarism:** The issue of plagiarism is an important topic in academic institutions of higher learning. This is the practice where an author or researcher has to ensure that any work which is written should be original and be devoid of some texts, results or even expressions which are borrowed, manipulated or used such as ideas, processes, results or even words of the author or publication without acknowledging where the information has been obtained from.<sup>36</sup> This malpractice has been necessitated by the advancement of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the contemporary society.<sup>37</sup> The most common aspects of plagiarism occur in the introductory pages such as in the introduction and in literature review. This could be attributed to laziness, ignorance or diversity of cultures hence affecting the integrity of the researcher. It is the responsibility of the writer to quote, or cite the original material appropriately. The two forms of plagiarism include 'self plagiarism' or 'multiple duplication' which is also known as 'salamis'. This is a situation where identical material is noted in two or more publications. The other form of plagiarism is 'redundant publication' which occurs if a researcher re-uses his earlier work in another research without making appropriate references to the earlier work or when some information which has been already published is re published but with some additional new data. Perhaps the intention of the researcher is to overemphasize on the findings that were already made. But, this definitely interferes with research analysis and violates the copyrights law. Some of the tools that are used to test plagiarism include; the iparadigms 'ithenticate' – <http://lithenticate.com>. And the turnitin – <http://turnitin.com> which is used by the University of Nairobi. The two software providers have partnered with cross ref-<http://www.crossref.org> to verify the originality of documents that are submitted for publishing. This exercise is observed at the University of Nairobi where all post graduate students are expected to subject their projects and theses through the turn it in software. The Masters and PhD candidates are expected to subject their written works to this software and be 15% or less compliant of plagiarized material. A report must then be acknowledged and submitted together with the written projects to the Board of Post graduate Studies for approval before a graduate is included in the graduation list. All academic members of staff and post graduate students are also encouraged and advised to enroll and obtain Google scholar accounts and have their published documents uploaded accordingly.

**Writing and publishing Ethics:** The publication of articles in peer reviewed journals or a book is mandatory in academic and professional advancement in institutions of higher learning. The rule of the thumb at the University of Nairobi is, 'publish or perish'. With this in mind, each institution of higher learning has to motivate its scholars to engage in the art of publishing so as to improve on its visibility and ranking to compete with other institutions in Africa and the world in Webometrics. Any written article must be original and should make significant contribution to knowledge by presenting findings that will be interesting to be read by other scholars. And, it can only be submitted for publishing if it is well researched, written and adheres to the necessary research ethical guidelines.

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<sup>33</sup>Kour S., Ethical and Legal issues in Educational research. *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, 4(6). (2014).

<sup>34</sup> Mugenda, note 4.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*

<sup>36</sup> Kour, note 5.

<sup>37</sup> Saunders M, Lewis P. & Thornhill A. (2011). *Research Methods for Business Students*, 5th ed, Pearson: New Delhi.

An article could be written by one author or more authors. In some instances, it could be written by a forthcoming scholar or graduate student who then writes the name of a senior scholar without informing the scholar so as to participate in joint ownership of the paper. But, each of them must have a definite role to play so as to earn credit to the final product and enhance accountability when the work is finally published. The paper can only be original if the authors jointly agree with the information. They should show their affiliation to an institution of higher learning because, it is mandatory for the researcher or author of a paper or article to contribute in one way or the other to the final paper. Upon completion of writing, the article is submitted to the Chief Editor or editor of a journal who then forwards it to a minimum of two academic scholars for peer review. The comments from the reviewers are meant to check on the quality of the paper by offering scholarly advice and input to it. These views are then forwarded to the author or authors who adhere to the rubric before the paper is accepted for publishing in the next journal issue. It is however unethical to submit one article to two different journals or duplicate publication of research findings without informing the editors that the work is under consideration elsewhere.

### **15. Method of Data Collection in Legal Research**

The data collection methods typically associated with qualitative research methodology include document analysis, interviews (individual or through focus groups), and participant observation. The data collection methods typically associated with quantitative research methodology include distributing questionnaires and measuring interventions by conducting a randomized controlled trial. Using a questionnaire is significantly less complicated than conducting a randomized controlled trial. This section summarizes issues to consider when implementing a questionnaire.<sup>38</sup> If the researcher has to conduct a randomized controlled trial, he or she should seek assistance from an expert.<sup>39</sup> This section provides an overview of some common data collection strategies and discusses the appropriateness of each of those strategies: a) Document analysis, b) Participant observation, c) Interviewing, d) Using questionnaires

**Document Analysis:** Document analysis includes the collecting of both secondary and primary documents. These could include a vast array of document types, ranging from rule of law donor reports to minutes of donor meetings, laws and regulations, maps, personal and public letters, transcripts of speeches, and organizational memos. In qualitative research, collecting and analyzing documents is used to inform and understand the research context. Collecting any documented material that seems relevant for the research is advisable. For example, the researcher may find significant insights or valuable information in the diary notes of a female police officer describing her experience of interacting with foreign rule of law practitioners, or a donor report that is not public but that outlines planned training activities for the Afghan police force. A researcher can collect documents in many different ways, such as asking individuals for documents (e.g., at an interview when specific documents or reports are being mentioned), emailing rule of law organizations with requests for documentation, or attending workshops or seminars where written documentation is distributed.

**Participant Observation:** Participant observation is a data-collection method that is useful for detecting the dynamics of interactions, behavior, and relationships during events, such as meetings, rule of law workshops, dialogues, interactions outside or inside a court house or police station, and public demonstrations and speeches.<sup>40</sup> As a method, it enables the researcher to describe existing situations using the five senses (sound, sight, touch, smell, and taste). From participant observation, the researcher can learn about the ‘physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts in which study participants live; the relationships among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms, and events; and people’s behaviors and activities—what they do, how frequently, and with whom.’<sup>41</sup> Participant observation takes place in locations that have relevance to the research questions (e.g., a court room). The researcher approaches participants in their own environments, instead of having the participants come to the researcher. Gaining access to some environments (e.g., a police station, a training center) may require obtaining permission (legal, institutional, or cultural) before beginning observations. Hiring or partnering with someone who is more familiar with the research environment and can facilitate these processes may assist the researcher. The researcher will usually try to visit an environment

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<sup>38</sup> Needham and Vaske, ‘Survey Implementation, Sampling, and Weighting Data.’

<sup>39</sup> Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy and What Works Clearinghouse, ‘Key Items to Get Right When Conducting a Randomized Controlled Trial in Education,’ <http://coalition4evidence.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Guide-Keyitems-to-Get-Right-RCT.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Barbara Kawulich, ‘Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method,’ *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6, no. 2 (2005), <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/466/996>;

<sup>41</sup> Natasha Mack et al., ‘Module 2: Participant Observation,’ in *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector’s Field Guide* (Research Triangle Park, NC: Family Health International, 2005),

or attend an event discreetly. If possible, the researcher should take detailed and objective notes while in the process of observing; if that is not possible, the researcher should write down his or her recollections as soon as possible after the observation. Ideally, people or events should be observed at different times of the day and on different days of the week. People's behavior should be observed in different settings or locations, because behavior can be influenced by contextual factors.

**Interviewing:** Conducting interviews with individuals or groups of individuals (the 'interviewees') is a common method of collecting data. Interviews can take a variety of formats, and are usually described as being either one of the following, or a mix thereof:

- *Structured:* The interviewer (who is usually the researcher) follows the prepared interview protocol, asking the same questions to every interviewee. The interviewer often takes notes or tape records the interview. Few questions are open-ended.
- *Semi-structured:* The interviewer follows the prepared interview protocol, but departs from it, when necessary and appropriate, to ask follow-up questions or to clarify certain answers. The interviewer often takes notes or tape records the interview.
- *Unstructured:* The interviewer has no interview protocol, but usually does have a plan as to what subjects to focus on. The interviewer often takes notes or tape records the interview. The interview consists mainly of open-ended questions.
- *Informal:* The interviewer has no interview protocol and talks to people in the field, outside of a formal interview setting. The interviewer does not take detailed notes (except perhaps for jotting down a few brief notes) and does not tape record the interview; instead, the interviewer tries to recall as much as possible of the conversations when writing up the notes as soon as possible after the conversation.
- *Focus Groups:* A focus group leader asks semi-structured questions to a group of interviewees.<sup>42</sup>

### ***The Practice of Interviewing***

Several practical aspects of interviewing, especially in a more formal setting, should be considered in advance of conducting the interviews. These considerations are important for ethical reasons, for making the interview run smoothly so that the researcher can get as much valuable information from it as possible, and for making both the interviewer and interviewee feel comfortable during the interview. How to find research participants to interview is explained in the previous section of this guide. At this stage of the research process, the researcher has to schedule the interviews. The location should be in a location where the interviewees (and the researcher) will be comfortable. Some interviewees may feel at risk as a consequence of participating in an interview. The risk can range from the fear of losing one's job to suffering physical harm. Conducting the interview in a place where the research participant feels secure is therefore paramount. Before starting an interview, the researcher should introduce himself or herself and the project to the interviewee. One INPROL practitioner notes that a common research mistake is failing to explain the purpose of the project. For example, when conducting research on trust between a community and the security sector, failing to highlight the purpose of the project may lead the police to assume that you are collecting information to be used against them, while the community will assume you are collecting information on behalf of the police. Such misapprehensions may lead both sides to give misinformation.

If the researcher is using a tape recorder, the interviewee must be asked for, and must give, permission for the conversation to be recorded. The researcher should then explain how written or tape recorded records of the interview will be handled and the ethics standards that govern the research. Some researchers tape record their interviews while some rely purely on written notes. The decision of how to record an interview should depend on the sensitivity of the issue being researched, and especially concern for the safety of the research participants. The researcher should have a good understanding of whether or not tape recording is suitable before starting data collection, but should nonetheless remain flexible. Tape recording an interview with a judge or law professor, for example, might not be an issue if the judge or professor is not worried about losing his or her job or being targeted in other ways for speaking candidly. Victims of violence, however, might well be afraid of speaking to someone about their experiences. Sometimes, even taking written notes can be sensitive, and the researcher has to rely on memory and write down as much as possible after the interview.

In giving his or her consent to be interviewed and for the interview to be used by the researcher in a particular way, the interviewee should have the option of signing a written consent form or of giving his or her oral

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 'Qualitative Research Guidelines Project.' See section on interviewing and its subsections on different interview types, <http://www.qualres.org/HomeInte-3595.html>.

consent. When asking questions, it may become apparent that the interviewee does not understand them fully. At such points, the questions should either be skipped or modified to avoid making the interviewee feel uncomfortable while still collecting relevant data. One INPROL practitioner comments:

A related mistake researchers often make is assuming interviewees understand the questions in the same way as the researcher. Even where an interviewee is highly educated or works in a similar field [to the researcher], language, culture, and other barriers can mean researchers and interviewees do not share a common understanding a question's meaning. It's important to always keep in mind the strong possibility that your questions will be misinterpreted and prepare all those involved in a project to explain the questions in clear, simple terms.

Objectivity as a researcher is more difficult to maintain in practice than in theory. Thus, when conducting interviews, it is important to be flexible and dynamic, an attentive and humble listener, and not to insert one's emotions and feelings into the interview. Such behavior does not preclude the researcher from asking follow-up questions or explaining to the interviewee which subjects are of most interest and relevance for the research. Giving interviewees enough time to answer questions is important. Failing to allocate sufficient time for and between interviews may cause the researcher to rush through the interview and leave with incomplete answers. The researcher should not, however, seek to prolong an interview if the interviewee is eager to finish the interview quickly.

### **Convening a Focus Group**

A focus group is a form of group interview in which a 'moderator' (i.e., a discussion leader, who is often the researcher or a research assistant) asks questions to a group of people and facilitates a guided discussion. A focus group is similar to a group interview and can be more effective than a series of individual interviews in terms of cost, time, and breadth of information collected. Other advantages of using focus groups include flexibility and ability to generate quick results (one group generates the views of many participants in the same time). Additionally, a focus group might reveal information that is difficult to obtain from individual interviews—for example, dynamics within a group, comparisons that focus group participants make between their experiences, or the level of consensus on a particular topic. Participants in a focus group are usually selected based on their relevance and relationship to the topic under study (i.e., they are part of a purposive sample) but they can also be randomly sampled. A focus group typically consists of between six and ten individuals, though there is no hard and fast rule on size.<sup>43</sup> As focus groups are a type of group interview, they may include structured or semi-structured questions, depending on what level of discussion the researcher wants to stimulate. The moderator reads the questions out loud to the group. The same ethics and practical considerations that apply to individual interviews apply also to focus groups.

The level of the moderator's involvement will vary from low to high depending on what seems suitable in the specific context.<sup>44</sup> For example, if the discussion between focus group participants is lively and centered on the research topic, the moderator may not want to intervene; if the discussion is listless and off subject, the moderator may need to step in and repeat or rephrase questions in order to get the conversation going. However, too much probing from the moderator may offend participants, especially those who feel uncomfortable contributing to a group discussion. (Such feelings of discomfort might also be important information for the researcher to capture.) The moderator should be aware of areas of discussion that are contentious and, if not managed, might lead to conflict within the group. Moderating a focus group requires a flexible and humble, but also a disciplined moderator. The discussion should be recorded either electronically or in writing. A common challenge is keeping track of who is speaking and when. Having several researchers attend and take notes can help reduce this problem. In light of the fact that focus groups provide data in the form not only of responses to questions but also of interactions among participants, it is important to record nonverbal behavior such as an angry looks or other body language. When video is used to record the discussion, notes should still be taken in case nonverbal interactions occur out of camera shot. As with all interviews, informing participants about if and how the discussion will be recorded and obtaining their written or oral consent to participate in the interview is essential.

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 'Focus Groups,' <http://www.qualres.org/HomeFocu-3647.html>.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*

### **Using Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are commonly used as a tool for data collection in quantitative research.<sup>45</sup> They may cover a large random selection of people who have been through a sampling procedure, as described in the previous section. However, in some cases, researchers carrying out qualitative research will distribute a questionnaire to a purposively selected sample of research participants to obtain quantifiable information.<sup>46</sup> Questionnaires are used and distributed with the aim of encouraging high response rates and thus minimizing nonresponses. In order to ensure a high response rate, the researcher needs to consider if there are adequate time and resources to use the questionnaire at a scale and level of professional quality sufficient to generate useful and useable data. Issues to consider include access (e.g., an online questionnaire is not a good idea in a setting where Internet access is limited) and security (e.g., can the researcher safely travel to certain places to get responses, and will respondents be safe in responding to the questionnaire?).<sup>47</sup>

Among the various ways of distributing a questionnaire are mail, on-site visits, and email. If the questionnaire is distributed by mail, the researcher not only has to obtain addresses of where to send it but also has to take steps to encourage respondents to mail it back once they have completed it. In the absence of direct interaction between the researcher and respondent, there may be little incentive for people to fill in the questionnaire. Good practice suggests that a well-written and attractive questionnaire, personalized correspondence, and repeated mailings may increase the response rate. In a conflict setting, the postal service may not be functioning well, which makes distribution via mail challenging.

On-site questionnaires require the researcher to travel to where the respondents live or work. Door-to-door, on-site household questionnaire distribution may be the only option when a population list is unavailable or people are unable to respond accurately to a questionnaire administered in any other way. Ensuring the safety and security of those distributing a household questionnaire is imperative. The questionnaire can also be distributed online via various types of dedicated software (e.g., Survey Monkey) or through email, with the questionnaire sent as an attachment. The response rate to an on-line administered questionnaire may be low. Therefore, it is advisable to establish contact with respondents in advance of distributing the questionnaire; advance notice of exactly when the questionnaire will be sent is also likely to improve response rates.<sup>48</sup>

### **16. Conclusion**

Interviews may be either structured or unstructured. In the case of the former, the interviewer has well defined questions presented in a set sequence. Such questionnaires can only be used when a certain amount is already known about the topic/situation being studied. The unstructured interview, where the researcher has only a list of topics which can be added to or changed in the course of the interview, is employed when little is known about the subject of study. The depth interview is a one-to-one encounter, concluded at length, that enables the researcher to tackle sensitive and/or potentially embarrassing topics with the individual. Depth interviews are also useful when the decisions or behaviour under study are complex. Telephone interviews, though common in the developed world, are relatively rare in the developing world because of the low level of telephone ownership. In developing countries, telephone interviews are more often confined to industrial marketing research. The latest development in this field is computer - aided - telephone - interviewing. Bias can originate from the respondent and/or the interviewer. Respondent bias arises from poor memory, exaggeration or dishonesty, a lack of rapport with the interviewer or a misunderstanding over the purpose of the interview. Interview bias is most often due to a lack of objectivity and/or failure to administer questions properly and consistently. Focus group interviews involve small groups of 6-8 individuals who are encouraged to discuss a topic and are prevented from straying from that topic by a moderator. The moderator is armed only with a list of issues/topics to guide the discussion and, therefore, the focus group is an unstructured group interview and gives rise to qualitative data.

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<sup>45</sup> Fluid Surveys University, 'Solving the Mystery of the 'Survey Questionnaire,' <http://fluidsurveys.com/university/solving-mystery-surveyquestionnaire/>.

<sup>46</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design*; and John W. Creswell, 'A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research' (London: Sage, 2014). 4.

<sup>47</sup> Needham and Vaske, 'Survey Implementation, Sampling, and Weighting Data.'

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*