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Documentation of Face-to-Face Surveys

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These slides are based on the GESIS Survey Guideline paper about documentation of face-to-face surveys :

Schröder, Jette, & Zabal, Anouk (2021). Documentation of Face-to-Face Surveys. Mannheim, GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS - Survey Guidelines). DOI: 10.15465/gesis-sg_en_041

Please cite the slides as:

Schröder, Jette, & Zabal, Anouk (2023). Slide Set: Documentation of Face-to-Face Surveys. Mannheim, GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS - Survey Guidelines).

A complete list of all references used on these slides can be found in the above-mentioned Survey Guideline paper.

Importance of Survey Documentation

- Documentation of data collection process and data processing

  ▶ is an integral element of good scientific practice

- Documentation enables external researchers to

  ▶ assess the quality and informative value of the data

  ▶ fully exploit the data's potential

  ▶ replicate the study

➡ Documentation is important for survey projects of any size and scope

Right Timing of Documentation

- Best practice:

  - ▶ Collect information and document specifics immediately during survey implementation

  - ▶ Include documentation requirements in survey protocols

  - ▶ Include documentation requirements in interviewer materials and training

➡ Consider documentation needs already in the planning phase of the study

List of Aspects to be Documented

- The list of documentation topics provides an overview of key information that should ideally be documented for face-to-face surveys

  - Not all points are applicable to every survey
    - List needs to be adapted to specific survey

- There are numerous possibilities for more detailed survey documentation – inspiration can be found by looking at the documentation of large-scale surveys (e.g., ALLBUS, PIAAC, ESS, pairfam)

Documentation Topics

1. Key Facts
2. Survey Ethics and Data Privacy
3. Sampling
4. Measurement Instruments
5. Paradata and Auxiliary Data
6. Fieldwork Staff
7. Fieldwork
8. Survey Metrics
9. Data Processing

Key Facts (I)

- Project title
- Key objectives of study
- Embedding of survey in larger project context
  - e.g., a national survey within an international project
- Principal investigators, project team members and affiliations
- Funding institution
- Fieldwork agency
  - alternative: carried out by survey team
- Survey design
  - e.g., cross-sectional, repeated cross-sectional or panel survey (incl. number of waves and time interval between waves)

Key Facts (II)

- Target population

- Fieldwork period

  - start, end, duration

- Survey mode(s)

  - CAPI, CASI, Audio-CASI etc.

- Realized sample size

- Average interview duration

- Data access

  - whether and, if so, where and how data can be obtained by other researchers

Survey Ethics and Data Privacy

- Ethics approval

- Consent
  - e.g., informed consent to survey participation, supplementary consent for data linkage, incl. how target person is informed (e.g., data protection sheet) and specifics of consent procedure

Sampling

- Target population
- Type of sampling
  - probability, non-probability
- Sample size
  - gross sample, target net sample size
- Probability samples
  - sampling frame and coverage error
  - detailed description of sampling stages and selection procedure incl. questions used to select/identify target person(s)
- Non-probability samples
  - recruitment methods and selection criteria

Measurement Instruments (I)

- Instrument components and topic areas
- Language versions and translation method
  - documentation of translation procedure
  - quality control
- Specifics of measurement instrument(s)
  - detailed documentation of measurement instrument(s); best practice is publication of survey questionnaire in all language versions (including showcards) with
    - questions
    - response alternatives, including e.g., information on which alternatives are to be read out, when showcards are administered
    - interviewer instructions and help instructions
    - routing or randomisation specifications
    - plausibility and consistency checks

Measurement Instruments (II)

- Specifics of measurement instrument(s), cont.
  - question/item source
    - e.g., questionnaire items/modules from other surveys, published scale, newly developed items/modules
  - if possible, screenshots of CASI-elements, screen capture of multimedia or interactive elements
  - design elements, e.g., experimental design, assignment of respondents to groups
- Codebook
  - variable names, response codes (may be documented together with specifics of measurement instrument in one file)

Measurement Instruments (III)

- Survey device and software

- Information on pretest/cognitive pretest/pilot studies

  - ▸ e.g., number and sampling of cases, timing, procedure, objective, consequences

- Interview duration (questionnaire/other instrument components)

Paradata and Auxiliary Data

- Include key auxiliary data in final data set
  - e.g., date of interview, interviewer identification number

- Document additional data (type and content)
  - process data, e.g., time stamps
  - observational data, e.g., interviewers' observations of neighborhood conditions
  - data from external sources, e.g., administrative data, data from registries

Fieldwork Staff

- Interviewers
  - e.g., selection criteria, number, attrition, characteristics (incl. experience), payment scheme

- Supervisors
  - e.g., number of supervisors, training

- Interviewer training
  - e.g., length, mode, sessions, main modules

- Interviewer materials and support
  - e.g., interviewer manual

Fieldwork (I)

- Data collection period
  - start, end, duration
- Fieldwork phases
  - incl. re-issues
- Incentives
  - e.g., monetary/non-monetary, prepaid/ postpaid, value, handling
- Advance contact and information material for target person
  - e.g., advance letter, study flyer/brochure, data protection sheet, study website, hotline
- Contact procedures and contact protocol

Fieldwork (II)

- Major problems affecting fieldwork
  - ▶ incl. strategies implemented to cope with problems
- Fieldwork monitoring
  - ▶ e.g., key performance indicators and monitoring intervals
- Procedural changes during fieldwork
  - ▶ e.g., incentive change, use of traveling interviewers
- Quality control
  - ▶ e.g., validation of interviews (in-person, phone, mail), checks of interview length, times

Survey Metrics

- Realized sample size
- Outcome rates
  - response rate, cooperation rate, refusal rate, contact rate, ideally calculated following AAPOR-scheme
- Distribution of final disposition codes for gross sample
  - ideally following AAPOR-scheme or an appropriate adaptation of AAPOR-scheme
- Contact attempts
  - e.g., average number of contact attempts for respondents and nonrespondents, overall distribution of total contact attempts
- Interviewer case load
  - average case load/average number of interviews per interviewer
- Sample characteristics
  - basic sociodemographics, representation of target population, nonresponse bias measures

Data Processing (I)

- Data entry
  - ▸ for paper questionnaires/instruments: automatic or manual data entry, software, number people entering data, data entry rules, quality control
- Data cleaning and editing
  - ▸ e.g., checks and handling of errors and inconsistencies (such as accepting, flagging, and recoding variables, or excluding cases)
- Coding of open-ended questions
  - ▸ e.g., coding institution, number of coders, coding scheme, coder training, quality control, documentation of reliability measures (such as Cohen's Cappa)
- Derived variables
  - ▸ purpose and construction of additional variables included in final dataset; if possible, publish syntax

Data Processing (II)

- Imputation procedure of missing values
  - ▶ variables and description of procedure for variables included in final dataset; if possible, publish syntax

- Weighting variables
  - ▶ purpose and calculation; if possible, publish syntax

- Anonymization of variables
  - ▶ description of confidentiality edits, e.g., suppression or coarsening of variables

- Linkage of additional data
  - ▶ linkage procedure and results

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