

Briefing

For all important studies, the research executive in charge should personally brief the field supervisor (the person who will actually supervise the team of field workers during the data collection). This briefing session is conducted after recruiting field workers, and ends with a practice round of mock interviews and questions from field workers on any special difficulties they may encounter in locating respondents, asking certain questions, and so on.

The mock interviews and the briefing session is designed to explain and clarify to the field workers “how” to go about their data collection task. In most studies, temporary field workers are recruited on a daily wage basis and paid on the basis of a minimum number of complete, usable questionnaires filled up.

The number of field workers required in each centre is usually estimated based on the sample size required, the locations where the sample can be found, the number of supervisors available, and the time limit for completion of field work. These are communicated by the research executive in charge to the field supervisors in his branch offices, who generally recruit the field workers.

Debriefing

It is important that any problems on the field get reported to the field supervisor or the research executive, and solutions found quickly. These problems may include difficulty in locating target sample units, or non-cooperation in answering some questions, or difficulties in comprehension.

To minimise any problems the field staff may encounter, a *debriefing session* is usually held at the end of the first day’s field work in each new centre (location). The field staff reports on the work progress, and problems faced in the field, if any. Solutions are thought of by the research executive or field supervisor, and implemented for the remaining part of the study.

Some of these problems are recognised even earlier if a *pilot study* of a small sample is performed, before starting regular field work. Alternatively, the first day’s or half day’s field work could be considered as a pilot study, and not included in the survey results.

ANALYSIS PLAN AND EXPECTED OUTCOME

Analysis is based on the answers given to questions. It is important to have an analysis plan in mind even before going to the field with a questionnaire. Regrettably, this is not always given the attention it deserves by the researcher. It is sometimes assumed that it can be done later, or that all possible analyses can be done anyway, so why bother to plan the analysis in advance. But for many reasons, it is vital to do so.

A very powerful reason is that the sample size gets reduced, if the analysis is done on parts of the sample. For instance, in a sample of 200 respondents, there could be 16 combinations of income (4 groups) and age (4 age groups). If analysis is performed for a combination of age and income, we get a 16-celled output matrix. Even assuming a uniform distribution of the sample into these 16 cells, each cell only gets a sample size of $100/16$ or 12.5 persons. This may not be good enough to draw