Constructing Survey Questions

Creating a survey questionnaire is one of the most essential steps in developing a survey. The questions must be clear and concise, and should be focused on the issue that the researcher wants to study.

A survey questionnaire is a tool used to collect information from the group of representatives of a target population, or simply, the sample. It is important to identify and clarify the questions to be included in the questionnaire to be able to ask only the queries that need to be asked and avoid any misleading or unnecessary questions.

How to Write the Questions

Step 1: Focus On Your Survey Goals and Objectives.

The first step in constructing survey questions [1] is putting your survey goal [2] on the limelight and listing initial or draft questions that emerge from the goal or purpose of the survey. Each question should directly relate to the goal of the survey.

Step 2: Identify the Attributes That Need to Be Measured.

Based on the survey goal, ask yourself what you want to measure from the responses of the participants. These attributes include the respondents' demographics, knowledge, skills,

attitude, perceptions, behaviour, intentions, beliefs and goals. In writing the questions, you may measure more than one attribute, for instance, the knowledge and skills of nursing students in performing CPR.

Step 3: Select the Appropriate Types of Questions.

Before you begin writing the questions, you must first learn the <u>types of questions</u> [3] used in a survey questionnaire. The two basic types of questions are the closed-ended and the open-ended questions. Each of these two has sub-types that you should consider before constructing the questions.

Step 4: Choose the Types of Response Options.

The type of <u>response options</u> [4] follow the type of questions you are to use in writing the questionnaire. For instance, a closed-ended, dichotomous type of questions means that the response options you should use are only "Yes" and "No", or "Excellent" and "Poor", or any two-point response scales.

Step 5: Check the Questions for Reliability.

<u>Reliability</u> [5] is an important measure on the consistency of the survey results that are gathered by using the questionnaire. It simply answers the question, "Do the respondents truly understand the meaning of the questions as they are stated?". The most commonly used reliability test for survey questions is the <u>test and re-test</u> [6] method that serves as the <u>pilot survey</u> [7].

Best Practices in Writing Questions

1. Begin writing questions that are easy to answer as this improves response and completion rates.
2. Use a direct and simple language in all the questions for more accurate responses from the participants.
3. Choose a type of question or response format according to the time frame allotted to conduct the entire survey and the length of valuable information from the responses. Time-restricted surveys should use more closed-ended questions. But if you want to explore the responses, you must include more open-ended questions.
4. Do not ask double questions; ask them one at a time. Instead of giving the question, "Do you like basketball or football?", ask them separately as in "Do you like basketball?" and "Do you like football?" in order to avoid confusion.
5. Write short and concise questions to increase response rates and facilitate completion of questionnaires.

Source URL: https://explorable.com/constructing-survey-questions

Links
[1] http://www.keene.edu/crc/forms/designingsurveysthatcount.pdf
[2] https://explorable.com/defining-survey-goals
[3] https://explorable.com/types-of-survey-questions
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