

“Seven Strategies for Successful Surveys” - Victoria Niederhauser

Niederhauser, Victoria P. “Seven Strategies for Successful Surveys.” *Journal of Pediatric Health Care* 20.3 (2006): 210–213. Web.

Abstract. 2.10.20

This article was written to focus on how to effectively extract medical information from patients via survey taking. There was also the added goal of gaining an “understanding” from the participants and how their lives have been impacted. While this research was intended to be used for assistance and reporting in the medical field, it outlines more general concepts of successful surveys and how to implement tips on effective survey research that I can apply to my own research topic.

Strategy #1: “Collect highest level of data possible”

The author defines three different forms of data: nominal, ordinal, and scale. Nominal data refers to things that can be identified via a naming system by which things can be categorized into groups. Ordinal data refers to things that carry an order and meaningful classification. Finally, scale data includes interval and ratio data. Interval data is, “a scale that has an equal distance between the items because of an accepted unit of measurement.” Similarly, ratio data is considered the highest level of data in this article because this kind of data has a “meaningful zero determined by nature.” With data collection, higher data can be reduced to lower level data to better fit the researcher’s intentions for the study. See example below (1.1).

1.1

Example of reducing higher data into lower level data:

A survey sample age ranges from ages 15 to 27 years and the drinking age was 21 years old; the actual ages could be recoded into “less than 21 years” and “21 years and older.”

Strategy #2: “Use valid survey instruments”

In this section, the author defines validity as, “how accurate measurement reflects the concepts being studied.” It is noted here that the survey should be focused and inclusive of potential reservations or interests that a person could hold based on the particular research topic being examined. There are two other types of validity that the author defines, criterion and construct. Criterion validity is the ability of the measured item or option and its correlation with current valid measures. Construct validity is the “agreement” between the theory being presented via surveyed options and the

measurement. This means that there should be a solid theory that the information being presented is based upon.

Strategy #3: "Evaluate the reliability of survey instruments"

This section insists that the survey must be both consistent and dependable but also that it is not quite possible to measure reliability exactly. It is said that, "A reliable survey instrument will produce the same results each time it is administered to the same person under the same circumstances." In order to ensure accurate results, the survey must hold a measure of reliability. Three types of reliability are outlined in this section, inter-rater/inter-observer, test-retest, and internal consistency. Inter-rater/inter-observer refers to the consistency between separate observers in the same situation. Test-retest refers to the stability of the survey used over a period of time, that is the consistency of the same observer taking the survey on multiple occasions. Internal consistency refers to the method by which the consistency of a survey can be measured and scaled.

Strategy #4: "Ensure a good response rate"

An adequate response rate from the participants will help ensure that there is less biases presented in the results. This section suggests that researchers create and carry out a plan for obtaining a high response rate from participants. The author sites a list of elements that can be used to reach a high response rate, (Dillman 2000) some including:

1. Make questions clear, following a sensible order, and design the survey for comprehension and easy response
2. include a token of appreciation

This insight is useful because it allows me to think about how many tabling sessions/classrooms I should be surveying in order to get as accurate of results as I can without asking for specific demographics from the participants.

Strategy #5: "Use a random sample"

The author suggests that by using a random sample, the researcher will be able to make generalizations about the population being surveyed. Random sampling here is defined as, "...every person in the population of interest has an equal chance of being selected to participate in the survey." The author also gives examples of how to choose a random sample in order to fulfill the research requirements. I currently have an idea of how I will get a random sample from the population at St. Olaf, that is my tabling and my classroom visits to multiple classes in every department.

Strategy #6: "Seek Funding"

While this strategy can be helpful for certain forms of survey research, it does not necessarily apply to my senior capstone research project.

Strategy #7: "Keep meticulous records"

This kind of research requires careful analysis in order to make conclusions about it; keeping an organized record of the research materials, surveys, and results will make

understanding the information easier and comprehensive. Potentially creating some kind of database may also be helpful. A database can be as simple or complicated as the researcher sees fit to appropriately categorize and organize data for analysis.

This article gave me a list of insights that will be helpful in the planning phases of my survey project. These tactics will be used for me to conduct a series of surveys and allow for me to attempt an accurate analysis of the collected data.