
Analysis of results from fieldwork

The questionnaire and the analysis of survey results

Section 1:

This should include as many demographic/social variables (gender, age, race, etc.) as many you need. The type of these variables will depend on the chosen subject (e.g. for your research, it is maybe useful to ask whether the person lives in his own house or he is a tenant).

Section 2:

This is the main section. It should be relatively short (people tend not to fill in long self-administered questionnaires). Because of this, the questions should be very precise and should be useful for your analysis.

You will have to start with your research question:

Does counselling help people?
Or rather:
How does counselling help people?

Now, you have to create hypotheses:

Let's assume (though you would have to ask it) that counselling helps people, so the questions are: how and under what condition.

As counselling is a process, so you have to identify the factors:

a) the counsellor
b) his/her competencies
c) the setting
d) any additional factors

Then identifying which of these factors are the success factors.

Thus the questionnaire should cover the following aspects:

a. Did counselling helped the concrete problem
b. To what extent did the personality of the counsellor helped
c. To what extent did the used technique helped
d. To what extent other factors (e.g. family, friends) helped in the situation
e. Others.

Because of this reason, the grouping of the questions is important. Imagine the person who fills in your questionnaire on did counselling help him – question 1: was it a pleasant room?!
So, you may create the second section of your questionnaire in the following manner:

1. Counselling helped me in solving the problem I sought to solve
2. I went to counselling
    a. By my own decision
    b. Referred by
3. If counselling was helpful in solving your problem, please rank the following competencies of the counsellor on a scale from 1-5:
    a. Technique
    b. Understanding
    c. Listening
    d. Responding
    e. Involvement
    f. Whatever
4. I felt secure in the counselling setting
5. If you felt secure, it is because
    a. Of the counsellor
    b. The place
    c. The ambiance
    d. Whatever
6. The success of counselling was helped by support of
    a. My family
    b. Friends
    c. Colleagues
    d. Whatever

Now then, the 5-value scale (Liker-scale) is a very useful and generally accepted measurement. A problem could emerge, however, if your sample is very fragmented. Let's suppose you have five age groups and you want to see whether 3.b above is influenced by age. If you have an even distribution and a sample of 50, you will have 2 in each box:

	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50
1	2	2	2	2	2
2	2	2	2	2	2
3	2	2	2	2	2
4	2	2	2	2	2
5	2	2	2	2	2

Though this is very unlikely to happen, it would make any analysis impossible. Thus, it is an accepted practice to merge 1-2 and 4-5. In this way, your table would look like:

	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50
1	4	4	4	4	4
2	4	4	4	4	4
3	4	4	4	4	4

Then you may want to reduce the number of age groups (you will have to justify it, though: 0-20: probably not having their own family, home, etc.; 21-40: people with mortgage, increasing income, small children, whatever):
So, the table now looks like this:

	0-20	21-40	41-
1	8	8	4
2	8	8	4
3	8	8	4

So, the basic and most important thing you can do with the answers you got is to create tables, in which the factor you think is the 'cause' is brought together with the factor that is influenced by. Thus in our example, our question is whether age influences the perception of the importance of understanding in the success in the counselling process. The 'cause' (age) is called independent variable, while the influenced factor (importance of understanding) is called dependent variable.

You may want to calculate correlation between the factors, which are variables. Spreadsheet programmes and statistical packages can calculate correlations (though you can do it manually too). The value of correlation is between –1 and 1. Thus, a correlation of –1 means that the two variables you analyse move to the opposite directions (i.e. if one increases, the other decreases). A correlation of 0 means that the two variables are independent of each other, while a correlation of 1 means that the two variables move together.

Important: correlation does not mean causal relationship! That is, a high correlation does not necessarily mean that one variable causes the other.

You may want to check the significance level of the correlation (the above mentioned softwares can do it). The significance analysis will say the probability of making conclusions from your sample to the entire population. E.g. if you have a sample of pubs which serve beer and you check whether they fill the glasses properly, what is the probability that your finding (let's say 5% of pubs cheat) are valid for all the pubs in the country/town/region, etc.

The result of the significance analysis (the 'p') should be between 0.01-0.03 (maybe 0.05) if it is any higher, the correlation cannot be extrapolated to the entire population, i.e. it could be an accidental correlation.

If you use the Liker-scale, you should avoid using mean average to describe the responses, because 4 (disagree) is not twice as big as 2 (agree). In this case, we tend to

use median (the most frequent value) or percentages. So, let's suppose to 3.b you got the following answers: 5: 20, 4: 6, 3: 8, 2: 3, 1: 1. So you may say: 'Most respondents considered understanding to be a crucial factor in the success of counselling, however, it has to be pointed out that 10% of the respondents thought that it was not important and a further 20% claimed that it was only moderately important. Therefore, we…'

Analysis of interviews

While there are specialist programmes that analyse the content of interviews, in my view, for a research project in a diploma in counselling course, the best way to bring out the most of the interviews is the method I describe below.

But first, about the interviews. In interviews you talk about topics, while you want to get answers to very concrete questions. As a result, you will have much more information than simply the answers to your prepared questions.

Let's assume that you have made eight interviews and used a semi-structured interview schedule. First, you identify the variables. Some questions include more than one variable. From the answers you identify the values (i.e. the answers to your question). ***It is very important that the values come from the interviews and you do not suggest these values to the person you interview.*** They will probably say something, let's say*: 'we've argued, my husband and I every day. It was becoming unbearable. Still we loved each other and wanted to find some solution'*. Let's suppose you give the Value (1) to such an answer. Obviously, it is possible that each respondent would give a different reason (that is you have as many values as many interviewees). Then you either have to live with it or you could try to group them. Even if you will not use all these variables in your (statistical) analysis, it will be helpful to you in structuring the information you gained. In addition, it will help you to identify links, let's say between the problem of the client and the counselling skills required to deal with it.

So going through the scripts or tapes of your interviews you found the following variables and values. Question refers to the question you actually ask, the Vs stand for the variables involved in the questions and the values stand for the answers the interviewee gave.

Q1: You went for counselling, why was that?

V0001: Purpose of going to counselling
Values:
1: seeking solution for a problem
2: referred to
3: I felt like

V0002: What problem?
Values:
1: marriage problem
2: problem with child
3: anxiety
4: stress
5: eating problems
6: drinking problems
7: insomnia
8: lack of self-confidence

V0003: Was counselling successful in your case

Values:
1: yes
0: no

Q2: Do you think your counsellor was competent?

V0004: Competent counsellor

Values:
1: yes
0: no

V0005: What were the most important competencies your counsellor had:

Values:
1: listening
2: understanding
3: helpful
4: open
5: respectful

V0006: What competencies do you think your counsellor was lacking?

Values:
1: listening
2: understanding
3: helpfulness
4: openness
5: respectfulness

Q3: How would you describe your relationship with your counsellor?

V0007: Nature of relationship with counsellor:

Values:
1: intimate
2: open
3: respectful
4: cold

And so on. This process is called coding. In this way you will be able to find out how many people thought that their counsellor was lacking openness, but also that, let's say, all of them were good listeners.

Once you finished the coding of your interviews, you may want to create tables, exactly the same types as it is used in questionnaires (see above). These are called cross tabs.