

SOCIAL SURVEY PROCEDURE

I. The Concept

1. Fact is a condition of reality independent from an observer or a completed event.

The following can serve as social facts:

- Behaviour of individuals or entire social community;
- Products of human activity (material or spiritual);
- Verbal actions of people (opinions, viewpoints, etc.).

2. Boundary conditions of sociological surveys

- 2.1. What is the practical or theoretical purpose of the survey?
- 2.2. What is the subject of the survey (which exactly interests us in this object)?
- 2.3. What is the condition of theoretical and practical knowledge which allows describing, generalizing and explaining facts in the given situation, i.e. the opportunity of choice of any theoretical and practical instrument for accurate description of the fact?

3. Methodology

Methodology is a system of principles of a scientific research.

Methodology is not connected with the essence of knowledge about the real world, but rather deals with operations with the help of which knowledge is constructed.

Methodology is totality of research operations, procedures, techniques and methods, including the techniques of collecting and processing data.

«... each science is applied logic...» - Hegel

4. Methods, technique and procedures

- 4.1. Methods and procedures of survey are a system of more or less formalized rules of collecting, processing and analyzing information.

4.2. Technique is a totality of techniques for effective usage of a method.

4.3. Methodology is a concept denoting totality of techniques.

Example:

During a public opinion poll a sociologist uses the methods of survey by questionnaire. For some reason the sociologist used two means of forming a questionnaire, namely:

- He/she formulated a part of the questions in an open form
- The other part of the questions in a closed form (with variants of possible answers), for example:

- completely agree – 4
- agree – 3
- don't know, cannot answer – 2
- disagree – 1
- completely disagree – 0



According to the given example of the answers mentioned beforehand, the numeric system by each answer is determined. In our case (top-down) the numeric system will be from 4 to 0, i.e. 4; 3; 2; 1; 0.

These two means form the technique of the given survey by questionnaire.

4.4. Procedure is the chain of all operations, i.e. the total system of actions and a means of organizing surveys.

Along with special methods, sociologists use generalized ones, particularly from economic, historical, psychological and other social and natural sciences (political science, physiology). However, sociologists, along with the abovementioned analysis, must have an idea about the corresponding divisions of mathematics and statistics.

Hereinafter we are to deal with methods and procedures, which form the totality of operations with empiric data of social processes.

5. Classification of operations

5.1. Category A is formed by methods and technique related to collection of source information.

- 5.2. Category B is formed by methods and technique related to the processing and analyzing initial data.

In its turn, Category A is subdivided into 2 sub-categories:

- a₁ – techniques connected with establishing valid information about single events or their combinations;
- a₂ – techniques related with determining the order of single events or their combinations.

II. Programme of theoretical-applied sociological survey

The content and structure of the program of the sociological survey depend on the main goal of the research activities. Two types of survey can be distinguished:

- Surveys, the aim of which is promoting solution of social problems through preparing approaches for their solution;
- Surveys, the aim of which is providing recommendations on solving rather distinctly outlined social problems for proposing certain means of actions in defining the terms.

6. The methodological section of the programme is composed of:

- 6.1. Formulating problems, defining the object and subject of research
- 6.2. Defining the goal and setting the target of research
- 6.3. Refinement of main concepts
- 6.4. Preliminary system analysis of the research object
- 6.5. Elaboration of working hypotheses

7. Procedural section of the program is designed in the following way:

- 7.1. Principled (strategic) plan of research
- 7.2. Substantiating the system of selecting units of measurement
- 7.3. Main procedures of collecting and analyzing initial data

8. The problem, object and subject of research

The problem of the research (the problem) has two sides:

- Gnoseological
- Material

Gnoseological side is a cognitive process which provides study of contradictions between common knowledge of people and lack of knowledge on the ways, means and techniques of these necessary actions for defining specific internal and external conditions of the studied objects.

Material side is a kind of social contradiction requiring organization of purposeful actions for its suppression or selection of alternatives of one or several possible ways providing social development of the object.

The object of sociological survey is what the research is directed to.

Along with the object of the sociological survey, *the subject of the sociological survey* is distinguished as well: i.e. more significant features which are subjected to direct study.

As an example let's review how a problem, object and subject of the research process of choosing a profession by graduates of high schools are formed.

The problem is the contradiction between equal rights in choosing a profession and actual opportunities of representatives of different social groups in the realization of this right.

The object is the graduates of higher schools and their parents at the moment of choosing professions and employment.

The research subject is the ratio between the plans on choosing a profession and their realization in practice.

Detection of life plans conditioned by parents' social-professional status, peculiarities of life conditions in the given region and individual peculiarities of graduates serve as a research subject.

Formulation of the problem and hence detection of research object and subject, are the first step towards the elaboration of the programme of sociological surveys.

9. Defining research goals and tasks

The research goal is the final result of the research.

Research goals and tasks form interconnected chains.

Definition of the research goal will allow regulate the process of search in future by way of sequence of solving primary, particular, as well as additional tasks.

10. Fundamental measurement of social characteristics

Measurement is a procedure with the help of which the object of the sociological research is measured, compared to certain standards and gets digital expression in a certain scale.

Any measurement begins with the search of the simplest qualitative features of the object the relations between which could be expressed in a certain digital scale.

In Paragraph 4 (Methods, technique and procedures) of this document there is an example of evaluating answers mentioned in questionnaires in advance by a 4-points system. This is an example of numerical evaluation of one of the qualitative features- judgements.

Let's assume that one object of the sociological is examined. If the given object has 8 features, i.e. judgements, then the highest point by the judgement scale will equal to $8 \cdot 4 = 32$ points in case of the lowest point is 0.

After the questioning a table is filled in which is called a scalogram. This is how the scalogram looks like:

Table № 1

Subject of the sociological survey (order number)	Total points by each judgement	Number of judgements							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
№7	7	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
№9	7	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
№10	6	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
№1	6	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
№13	6	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
№3	5	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	+
.
.
.
.
№12	1	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The given scalogram can be transformed in a way that all plus denotations will be in one side of the table, and we'll have a scalogram in the form of «short stairs». But let's consider the given table at first.

The first column-numbers of objects of the sociological survey are denoted in this column. Under each number a certain respondent (individuals or legal entities depending on the essence and methodology of the sociological survey) is implied.

The second column- here the number of judgements, to which the given respondent has answered, is denoted.

In columns 3-10 crosses «+» denote that the respondent answered and dashes «-» denote that the respondent didn't answer. The numbers in the second column just show the quantity of crosses on the given line.

Let's try to change this table.

Table № 2

Subject	Points	Judgement							
		7	5	1	8	2	4	6	3
№7	7	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
№9	7	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
№10	6	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
№1	6	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+
№13	6	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
№3	5	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
.
.
.
.
№12	1	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of points by each judgement		7	6	6	5	6	5	2	

Let's review Table № 2.

After sorting the respondents by the principle of sorting judgements from maximum to minimum of well-disposed answers, we get a scalogram which, strictly speaking, is not ideal as there are deviations in the kind of «+» and «-» in the left and right parts of the «short stairs».

It's practically impossible to get an ideal scalogram, but it's possible to assume that the deviation is not inaccuracy of the sociological survey which is in the frames of the admissible error in case of similar researches.

It's desirable to get less than 10% of the reliable interval of the admissible error. There is a special methodology for defining the interval of the admissible error of sociological surveys.

One of the methods of decreasing admissible error is excluding from the table the judgements which have minor weight (in our case it's Judgement 3). There are other methods, as for example, in case of the survey by questionnaire, reduction of suggested variants of answers.

In the further analysis of Table №2 (or Table №1) it's possible to assess the «value» of a point unit by each judgement by multiplying the number of points on each judgement by the «weight» of the supposed variant of answer by each respondent. In this case we get maximal or minimal weight of a judgement, i.e. will be able to define the importance of the judgement regarding the subject of the sociological survey.

11. Selection of respondents

Often there is a problem in measuring people's relation to rather complicated phenomena, and in this case we either cannot or don't want to divide these relations by their constituent aspects. In this case it's necessary to base on prerequisites that mental set of an individual on social objects contains emotional relations. That's why the task of measuring these relations is led to finding the degree of positive or negative tension of such relations.

For defining a respondent's emotional affiliation to positive or negative tension, the method (one of the methods) of defining his/her subjective threshold of value judgements in **Terstoun's scale** is used. The elaboration of this scale is carried out by stages.

Stage 1 – many positive judgements are devised, each of which reflect the relation of a respondent to a certain phenomenon. For example, they can be judgements reflecting an individual's relation to the law:

- The law should be observed in any case;
- There are cases when one may violate a certain provision of the legislation;
- If the punishments for not observing the law were severe, no one would break the law;
- I'm not very concerned about breaking the law if no one is aware of it;
- Other judgements.

Judgements must be completely unambiguous and comprehensible and should be formulated in a way that people sharing other opinion (opposite views) could not agree with them. Initial number of such judgements should be about 30.

Stage 2 – judgements mentioned in Stage 1 must be written on cards which will be given to future respondents. They should be about 50.

Stage 3 – future respondents are posed to sort all the judgements (cards) successively by 11 groups, so that the judgements reflecting maximal positive relation to the given object or phenomenon (according to the respondent) would be in the first group, and maximal negative judgements in the last-11th group. Neutral judgements (in future respondent's judgement) must be placed in group 6, and in the intervals between 1 to 6 and 6 to 11 all the other intermediary judgements.

Stage 4 – after the sorting an accurate analysis begins for determining the following:

- (a) –the level of conformity of the future respondents;
- (b) – «the value» of each judgement according to the scale of 11 intervals (this scale is experimental and relative).

Stage 5 – the judgements, (respondents) received the most consensual assessments, will be selected in the final group.

Stage 6 – all the judgements are shuffled confusedly for being used in the mass survey. Respondents express their agreement or disagreement towards each suggested judgement. There is no value of a judgement in the questionnaire: the weights of all judgements are written in the instruction on data processing.

Stage 7 –the normal «value» of judgements, belonging to the given group, is determined during the analysis.

Stage 8 – during the selection of a future respondent comparison of the «value» of his «individual» judgement with the normal «value» of the given group of judgements is carried out (number of groups from 1 to 11).

12. Methods of data collection

There are three fundamental classes for collecting source information (empiric data):

- Direct observations;
- Analysis of documents;

- Surveys.

However, the technique of their implementation is so varied that some of the techniques acquire the status of independent methods. For example: surveys can be carried out with the help of interviews or surveys by questionnaire.

Experimental methods and technological tests take a particular position in the complex of techniques of collecting source data.

12.1. Direct observations

The direct event posting by a witness is implied by the given class. There are different means for enhancing reliability of the data received through the direct observation.

There are two types of simple observations:

- Simple observation when the observer doesn't take part in the process;
- Simple observation with the participation of the observer in the process.

The choice of these methods depends on the objective.

If there is a necessity of practical impact on the course of the development of the process, then the method of simple observation with participation is often used.

The procedure of any observation is made of answers to the following questions:

- What to observe?
- How to observe?
- How to make notes?

12.2. Documentary sources

Any information fixed on different types of carriers (paper, magnetic carriers, photo, etc.) is called documentary sources in sociology.

According to the information source, documents are subdivided into initial and secondary. Secondary sources of information, as a rule, are verified on urgency and reliability.

12.3. Surveys by questionnaire and interviews

Survey is an irreplaceable method of obtaining information about the subjective world of people, their inclinations, the motives of the activities and judgements. Surveys allow to mentally stimulate any desired situation the experimenter needs for identifying sustainability of situations, motives and subjective states of individuals or communities.

Types of surveys are:

- Interviews;
- Questionnaire form.

An interview is a talk conducted by a certain plan. There are two types of interview-free and standardized.

Free interview implies long talks without strict specification of questions.

Standardized interview implies both formalized observations and long-term development of the whole procedure including the general plan of the interview, order and construction of questions and variants of possible answers.

Telephone interviews are used for quick checking of judgements.

Surveys by questionnaire are classified, firstly, by content and construction of asked questions. There are open surveys, when respondents express themselves freely, and closed surveys, when all variants of answers are envisaged in the questionnaire.

Express-survey is applied in public opinion polls and contains only 3-4 questions of basic information, plus several points regarding demographic and social characteristics of the respondents.

Each type of survey has its advantages and disadvantages. Selection of survey types depends on the assigned objective of the sociological research, time of acquiring results, selection of the group of respondents, professionalism of the specialist implementing the survey, reliability level of the acquired answers, selection of the scale of scoring answers, programme logic of answers, specifics of respondents' culture and experience, etc.

13. Analysis of empiric data

Analysis technique is a wide sphere, and if necessary, specialists use special literature. However, there are standardized techniques during the analysis of empiric data, namely:

- Grouping and typologization of the data;

- Search for inter-relations between the changes (of data);
- Experimental analysis;
- Analysis of the data of recurrent and comparative studies;
- Sequence of actions while analysing the data.

Grouping and typologization of the data

Simple grouping is the classification or regulation of the data by one criterion. Binding of facts into the system is implemented in accordance with the descriptive hypothesis regarding the leading criterion of grouping (or the criteria of classification). Thus, depending on the hypothesis, one can sum up the data by the criterion of age, gender, education, etc.

Grouping can be realized by the criterion of increase (decrease) of certain data series of the same types (quality).

The number of group members is called crew size, and the relation of this crew size to the total number of observations is called relative frequency.

There are different types of groupings: for example, simple groupings can be classified into crossed groupings according to any parameter.

Empiric typologization is a technique of analysis according to sustainable combinations of criteria of social objects (or phenomena) considered in several dimensions simultaneously: for example, regulating connections (defining connections) by three criteria of profession, qualification and education. In human communities these criteria determine creation of heterogeneous groups in these communities.

The study of multidimensional interrelations and interdependence between the data is a typical object in sociology.

14. Sequence of actions while analysing the data

Depending on the goals of the sociological survey, the analysis of the acquired data can be more or less profound and fundamental.

The first stage is the description of the block of data in their elementary form, namely:

- «Erasure» of data not responding to the model of sampling;
- Screening the data of incompetent respondents;
- Regulation of data by certain criteria.

The second stage is «compressing» the source information, i.e. revealing typical groups; forming aggregates.

The third stage is deepening the interpretation and transformation to explaining facts through revealing possible direct and indirect impacts on aggregates.

15. The programme and organization of a sociological survey

The programme and the work plan of the applied research form a single document.

The basic elements of the programme

1. Accurate formulation of the goal of the research with indication of the expected results.
2. Brief reasoning of the problem and possible means of its study.
3. Defining the types of selection (during selective research), its value is mentioned, methods of data collection and means of processing results are listed.
4. Work plan of the research. Stages of work and their due dates are mentioned in this section.
5. Preparation of the report with recommendations.