

Focus Group Discussion



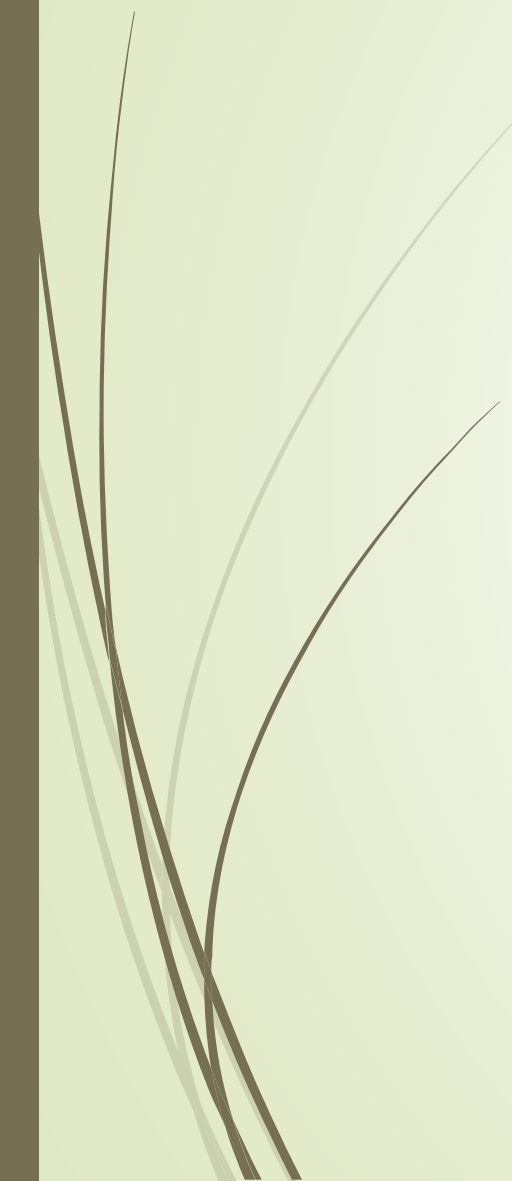


Focus Group Discussion

- A focus group discussion involves gathering people from similar backgrounds or experiences together to discuss a specific topic of interest.
- It is a form of qualitative research where questions are asked about their perceptions attitudes, beliefs, opinion or ideas.
- It is more formal way of getting groups of people to discuss a selected issue.



FGD cont...

- It is a discussion of 6-12 persons.
 - Participants are free to talk with other group members about certain issues.
 - Discussion is guided by a facilitator.
 - They are structured and directed, but also expressive.
- 



Purpose of FGDs

- To get a in-depth information in a relatively short time.

Duration of FGD

- Between one hour to one hour and a half.



How to conduct FGD?

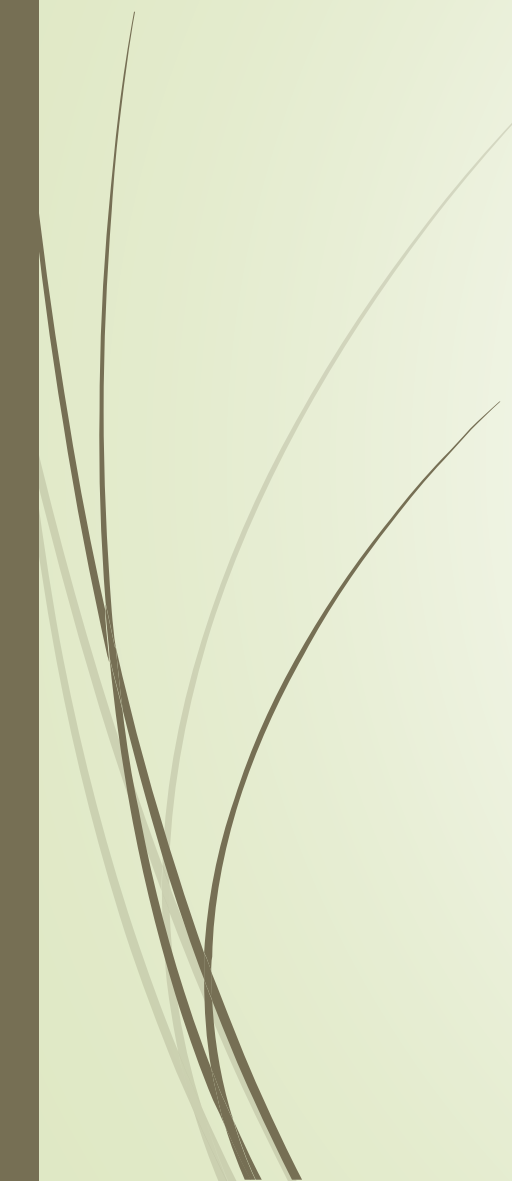


1. Preparation

- Selection of topic, questions to be discussed (open ended).
- Selecting the study participants:
 - ❖ - Purposive or convenience sampling.
 - ❖ - Similar background. Age, sex, status.
 - ❖ - 6-12 persons in a session.
 - ❖ - Contact the participants. Invitations.
- Making physical arrangements.



2. Conducting the session

- ▶ One of the members of the research team should act as 'facilitator' for the focus group. One should serve as 'recorder' (rapporteur).
- 



Functions of the Facilitator/Moderator:

- ▶ Act as a coordinator, not as an expert.
- ▶ Introduce the session.
- ▶ Encourage discussion.
- ▶ Encourage involvement. Ask for clarifications; reorienting the discussion when it goes off the track; bringing in reluctant participants. Deal with dominant participant
- ▶ Build Rapport. Observe nonverbal communication.



Some guidelines for the facilitator:

- ▶ Observe verbal as well non-verbal communication. What are they saying? What does it mean to them? Empathize.
- ▶ Do not try to comment on everything that is said
- ▶ Control the timings unobtrusively.
- ▶ Start with open questions.
- ▶ Keep praising and thanking people for their contribution. Make them feel their contribution is welcome and worthwhile.



Cont...

- ▶ Do not ask 'yes or no' questions, as this does not open up discussion,
- ▶ Summarize the main issues at the end of FGD.
- ▶ Check whether all participants agree.
- ▶ Thank the participants.
- ▶ Listen for the added comments after meeting has closed.



Functions of the Recorder

- Keep a record of the content as well as emotional reactions and nature of group interactions.
- Record the following:
 - ❖ - Date, time, and place.
 - ❖ - Names and characteristics of participants.
 - ❖ - Description of group dynamics (level of participation, presence of a dominant participant, level of interest).
 - ❖ - Opinions of the participants, as far as possible in their own words, especially the
- ❑ -key statements.
- ❑ - Emotional aspects (reluctance, strong feelings attached to certain opinions)
- ❑ - Vocabulary used.

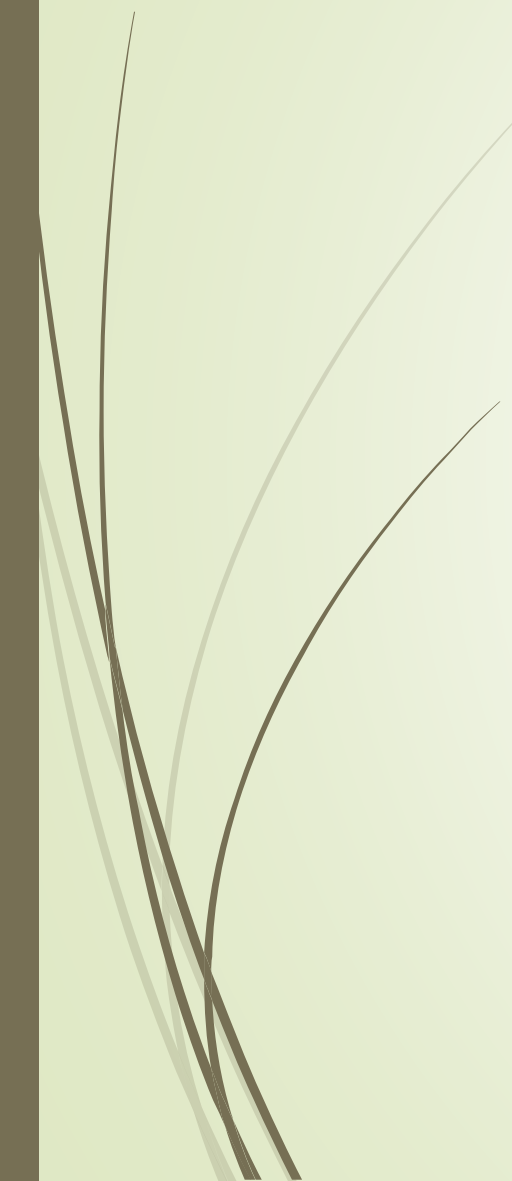


Cont...

- ▶ Assist the facilitator by drawing his/her attention to missed topics or missed comments from the participants.
- ▶ Help the facilitator resolve the conflict if necessary.
- ▶ Make sure a copy of the list of topics and key probe questions is available and referred to during the FGD.



3. Analysis of Results

- After each FGD the facilitator and recorder meet to review and evaluate the discussion.
 - The full report is prepared using the participants own words, listing the key statements, ideas and attitudes.
 - Additional questions are formulated if needed.
 - Answers of different sub-groups are compared.
 - The findings must be recorded in a coherent way.
 - The most useful quotations should be selected.
- 



4. Report Writing

- ▶ Start with a description of the selection and composition of the group and participants, and a commentary on the group process.
- ▶ Present your findings, following your list of topics and guided by the objectives of FGD.
- ▶ Include questions whenever possible, particularly the key statements.



Advantages

- Free and open discussion among the respondents results in generation of new ideas.
- A focus group is not static. The moderator can bring any changes in order to better facilitate the discussion during the group discussion. This dynamism allows better results in terms of information derived by a focus group.
- Produce a lot of information far more quickly, and at less cost than individual interviews.
- Help focus research and develop relevant research hypotheses. In-depth analysis of the problem and its causes.



Advantages cont...

- ▶ Help formulate appropriate questions for more structured, large scale surveys.
- ▶ FGDs are excellent for obtaining information from illiterates.
- ▶ Means to discover attitudes and opinions that might not be revealed through surveys. Help explore controversial topics.



Advantages cont...

- Usually well accepted by the community as this form of communication already exists.
- Supplement information on community KAP already available.
- Flexibility in discussion.
- Direct link with the population under study.
- Focus groups are good fun.



Limitations

- Results cannot usually be used for generalization.
- Participants often agree with responses from fellow members (for different reasons). Researcher to be cautious when interpreting the results.
- The moderator may influence the participants (bias).
- FGDs have limited value in exploring complex beliefs of individuals.
- FGDs can paint a picture of what is socially acceptable in a community rather than what is actually occurring or believed. (real and ideal problems)



Limitations cont...

- Respondents may be reluctant to share some sensitive ideas and concerns publicly.
- Though moderator can control the discussion, the extent to which he/she can control the discussion depends on his/her experience. Inexperienced moderator may face problems in controlling some participants who try to dominate the group.