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Q7(c)

Discuss the applicability of various sampling techniques in selecting the study group.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · Anthropology GS 1 · 15 marks · Marriage

2.3 Marriage: Definition and universality; Laws of marriage (endogamy, exogamy, hypergamy, hypogamy, incest taboo); Type of marriage (monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, group marriage). Functions of marriage; Marriage regulations (preferential, prescriptive and proscriptive); Marriage payments (bride wealth and dowry).

Core demand of the question

- Classify probability and non-probability sampling techniques
- Discuss when each is applicable in selecting an anthropological study group
- Give field examples, strengths and biases
- Connect sampling design to inference, ethics and hard-to-reach populations

Revision summary

Simple random and systematic sampling require a usable frame.

Stratification ensures analytically important minorities are represented.

Cluster and multistage designs suit dispersed regional surveys but need design-effect adjustment.

Purposive sampling selects information-rich cases; **theoretical sampling** develops concepts.

Snowball sampling reaches hidden groups but carries network bias.

Anthropological sampling should combine transparent inference, ethnographic depth, non-response analysis and ethics.

Introduction

Sampling selects cases from a defined population so that fieldwork is feasible. Its quality depends not on one universally best technique but on fit among research question, sampling frame, mobility, social boundaries and the inference claimed.

Body

Probability designs

- **Simple random sampling** gives every listed unit a known equal chance; suitable for a complete village household register, but costly over dispersed terrain.
- **Systematic sampling** takes every kth unit after a random start; efficient in settlement lists, unless periodic ordering creates bias.
- **Stratified sampling** samples within relevant strata such as sex, age, caste or ecological zone. It ensures small subgroups are represented and can improve precision.

- **Cluster and multistage sampling** first select villages or census blocks, then households and persons. This is practical for regional nutrition or morbidity surveys, though intra-cluster similarity enlarges sampling error.

Probability designs support estimable sampling error and population inference, provided non-response and frame omissions are addressed.

Non-probability and adaptive designs

Purposive sampling selects information-rich ritual specialists, healers or fossil collections; **quota sampling** fills categories without random selection; **convenience sampling** is fast but weak for generalisation. **Snowball sampling**, associated with referral chains, reaches stigmatised or hidden groups such as migrants, sex workers or drug users, but over-represents network hubs. Respondent-driven sampling attempts to model referral probabilities under strong assumptions. **Theoretical sampling** in grounded theory selects new cases to develop emerging concepts until saturation.

Classic intensive ethnography-Malinowski in the Trobriands or **M. N. Srinivas** in **Rampura**-often chose a site purposively, then used a census, genealogy and case studies within it. Statistical representativeness and ethnographic depth answer different questions.

Gatekeeper access, seasonal absence, household definitions, refusal and digital exclusion can bias any design. Tribal or vulnerable populations require community consent and protection from re-identification; oversampling a small group must not become extractive surveillance.

Flow diagram

Research question -> Population frame exists?
 Population frame exists? -> yes Probability sample
 Probability sample -> Random stratified or multistage
 Population frame exists? -> no or hidden Non-probability or adaptive
 Non-probability or adaptive -> Purposive snowball theoretical
 Random stratified or multistage -> Population inference
 Purposive snowball theoretical -> Depth or network access

Conclusion

Use random, stratified or multistage designs when estimating population patterns; use purposive, theoretical or network designs when mechanisms, rare expertise or hidden populations are the object. Triangulation and honest limits matter more than calling every sample representative.

Facts & figures

Stratified sample

Separate random samples within meaningful strata can protect subgroup representation and increase precision.

Multistage sample

Sequentially samples clusters, households and persons; practical at scale but observations within clusters are correlated.

Theoretical sampling

Grounded-theory practice of choosing subsequent cases for conceptual development rather than statistical representation.

Rampura

Srinivas's purposively selected village illustrates intensive case study whose strength is process and depth, not national prevalence.

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