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Q2(b)

Explain the different types of non- probability sampling techniques .Bring out the conditions of their usage with appropriate examples.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Research Methods and Analysis

Research Methods and Analysis: Qualitative and quantitative methods; Techniques of data collection; Variables, sampling, hypothesis, reliability and validity.

Core demand of the question

- Explain the different types of non-probability sampling techniques. Bring out the conditions of their usage with appropriate examples
- Keep the explanation within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Non-probability sampling gives no known chance of selection.

Convenience, purposive, quota, snowball, and **theoretical sampling** fit pilots, types, hidden groups, and saturation.

Gig networks, SHGs, and caste associations are typical Indian uses.

Census and **NFHS** remain the designs for rates.

Name the bias; do not sell a quota as a random national fact.

Introduction

Non-probability sampling does not give every unit a known chance of selection. It is not a failed census. It is a set of techniques used when a sampling frame is missing, when the population is hidden, or when the aim is theoretical saturation rather than a population estimate.

Body

Convenience and volunteer samples

- **The researcher takes those who are at hand:** a college class, a clinic queue, or an online form.
- **Condition of use:** pilot tests, student exercises, and rapid reconnaissance when bias is admitted.
- Example: a first sketch of gig-app riders waiting at a city hub. It cannot stand in for all informal labour in the **Census**.

Purposive or judgment sampling

- **Cases are chosen because they illustrate a type:** a successful SHG, a mill town, a mixed-caste panchayat.

- **Condition of use:** case study and expert selection when the type, not the proportion, is the object.
- **Max Weber's ideal type logic sits here:** the case is chosen for theoretical clarity.

Quota sampling

- Interviewers fill cells by sex, age, or caste until a quota is met, without random draws inside the cell.
- **Condition of use:** rapid opinion work when a frame is costly, as in some market and exit-poll designs.
- **Limit:** interviewers pick the easiest persons in the quota, so hidden groups stay hidden.

Snowball or chain referral

- One respondent names the next. Networks of migrants, users of a banned substance, or caste-association office-bearers can be reached this way.
- **Condition of use:** hidden or rare populations with no list. Bias follows the first seeds and the dense core of the network.
- Example: mapping a platform of gig workers through WhatsApp groups, or tracing a caste association's office network.

Theoretical sampling

- Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss select the next case to develop a category, and stop at saturation.
- **Condition of use:** grounded theory and ethnography, not a **NFHS**-style estimate of anaemia.
- Example: adding a male unpaid-care case after women's SHG talk has saturated a theme.

When not to use them

- Official rates of literacy, fertility, or vote share need probability designs like the **Census** and **NFHS**.
- Mixing a snowball story with a national percentage without warning is a method error.

Flow diagram

Non-probability -> Convenience
Non-probability -> Purposive
Non-probability -> Quota
Non-probability -> Snowball
Non-probability -> Theoretical saturation
No frame hidden group -> Non-probability
Population estimate -> Probability Census NFHS

Conclusion

Convenience, purposive, quota, snowball, and **theoretical sampling** are legitimate when the frame is absent, the group is hidden, or the aim is a type. They are the wrong tools for population totals. State the condition, show the bias, and do not dress a chain of names as a **Census**.

Facts & figures

Snowball sampling

Chain referral for hidden populations; estimates follow network structure, not a frame.

Theoretical sampling

Glaser and Strauss: next cases are chosen to develop categories until saturation.

Quota sampling

Cells filled by interviewer choice; common in rapid polls, weak for rare or stigmatised groups.

NFHS

A probability household survey; the contrast case when a national rate is required.

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