

## Delphi Technique Theoretical Framework in Qualitative Research

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### ABSTRACT

Using specialized knowledge and perspectives of a set in decision-makings about issues that are qualitative is very helpful. Delphi technique is a group knowledge acquisition method, which is also used for qualitative issue decision-makings. Delphi technique can be used for qualitative research that is exploratory and identifying the nature and fundamental elements of a phenomenon is a basis for study. It is a structured process for collecting data during the successive rounds and group consensus. Despite over a half century of using Delphi in scientific and academic studies, there are still several ambiguities about it. The main problem in using the Delphi technique is lack of a clear theoretical framework for using this technique. Therefore, this study aimed to present a comprehensive theoretical framework for the application of Delphi technique in qualitative research. In this theoretical framework, the application and consensus principles of Delphi technique in qualitative research were clearly explained.

**Keywords** - Delphi Technique, Qualitative Research, Theoretical Framework

Date of Submission: 07 April 2014

Date of Publication: 23 April 2014

### I. INTRODUCTION

Delphi is a name of temple in ancient Greek, which is the origin of Apollo's divine inspirations, god of sun and music. Greeks and ancient nations came in Pythia, the goddess of Delphi temple to predict the future [1] [2]. The Delphi technique was originally proposed based on people's conjecture, judgment, and inspiration but gradually took the academic form. For the first time in the late 1950s, in a research by U.S. RAND Corporation, the Delphi was introduced for the scientific study of experts' opinions on military defense project. However, for the security reasons, this technique was not proposed over ten years and in 1963, Dalkey and Helmer introduced it [3] [4]. Its first non-military use was suggested for economic development planning [5] [6] [7]. This technique gradually found its place in the academic studies but from the mid-90s, it became highly popular. Landeta's study indicated that since 1995 to 1999 a total 444 articles on this technique have been published in "Science Direct" and "ABI / Inform" journals. Since 2000 to 2004, this number has increased to 667 articles [6]. Among the various features of the Delphi technique, its four features are usually unchanged including anonymity, iteration, controlled feedback, and statistical "group response" [8] [9] [10].

Most researchers have used all [11] or some [12] [13] of the definition set out by Linstone and Turoff (1975) who define the Delphi technique as "a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem" (p. 3) [14]. The main purpose of the Delphi method is "to acquire the most reliable consensus of a group of experts' opinion by 'a series of intensive questionnaires combined with controlled opinion feedback' (p. 458) [15]. By obtaining the consensus of a group of experts using the process, researchers can identify and prioritize issues and develop a framework to recognize them [16] [2]. Hasson et al. (2000) argued that modified Delphi, policy Delphi, and real-time Delphi have all been used, while there are many potential types of Delphi techniques [17]. Three broad categories are generally in use and these are classical, policy and decision [18]. The Delphi technique is applied as a tools and method for consensus building using a series of questionnaires for data collection from a panel of selected participants [15] [19] [14] [20] [21] [22].

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