

Community and Family Studies

Research Methods

Primary and Secondary Research

- **Primary Research**

- Original information or research collected by the person doing the research.

- **Secondary Research**

- Existing information or other people's research which is synthesised and brought together by the researcher.
- Secondary research information can be derived from formal reports, journals, newspapers, magazines and other publications.

Research Methods

- *Methods* refers to the tools used in an investigation or the ways that data is collected and analysed.
- There are two main types of research:
 - **Qualitative**, and
 - **Quantitative**.

Qualitative Research

- Qualitative research is useful for studies at the individual or small group level and for finding out how and what people are thinking and feeling.
- Analysing qualitative data can be more challenging than quantitative data.
- Qualitative data needs to be categorised into broad themes and ideas before it can be analysed.

Features of Qualitative Methods

- Qualitative research involves open-ended questioning, non-statistical research techniques, or value-based observations.
- Qualitative investigations focus on **WHY** and **HOW**.
- Usually uses a small sample that is not randomly selected.
- More interactive than quantitative methods.
- Characteristics of the participants may be known, and participants may be chosen because of those characteristics.

Features of Qualitative Methods Cont.

- Often involves the creation of a narrative report including description of behavior, values, attitudes and beliefs.
- Contains direct quotations from participants.
- Important for collection of subjective (personal) experiences.
- Relies on the researcher's interpretive skills to understand the findings.

Qualitative Methods

Questionnaire	Asking open-ended questions, gathering people's feelings and opinions.
Content Analysis	Analysing and interpreting themes, words and images from documents, film, art, music and other cultural artefacts and media. After coding the responses, the researcher analyses, interprets and makes qualitative judgements about meanings of the content.
Interviews	Asking open-ended, rather than yes or no, questions.
Focus Groups	Collecting data from an in-depth planned discussion of a defined topic held by a small group of people brought together by a moderator.
Participant Observation	The researcher is immersed in the action being observed and his or her role as researcher is not obvious.
Non-Participant Observation	The researcher observes activity without participating.
Case Study	An in-depth study of a cultural group, which can be any group of individuals who share a common social experience and/or location.

Quantitative Research

- Quantitative data is collected by counting and can be written as percentages and represented by tables and graphs.
- Quantitative research methods are used to collect specific data from a sample of the relevant population. These findings may then be **extrapolated** for the whole population under study:
 - *E.g. If $\frac{1}{2}$ of the people in your sample are allergic to nuts, you can extrapolate these findings to propose that $\frac{1}{2}$ of the relevant population are allergic to nuts.*

Shortcomings of Quantitative Research

- There are some shortcomings of quantitative research methods:
 - They do not allow the researcher to interact closely or personally with those being questioned; the process is impersonal and as objective as possible.
 - They rely heavily on the researcher's ability to develop a non-biased set of research questions.

Features of Quantitative Methods

- Researchers collect data that can be measured, counted or quantified, resulting in a statistical report.
- The focus of quantitative research is **WHAT** and **HOW MANY**.
- Uses large, randomly selected samples of respondents who represent the population being researched.
- Uses a structured data collection instrument (such as a survey), with closed-ended or rating-scale questions.

Features of Quantitative Methods Cont.

- Identifies quantities and trends.
- The researcher is not necessarily known to the participants.
- There is a lack of direct contact between the researcher and sample population.
- The findings are quantified and represented in numerical data, tables, graphs and diagrams.

Quantitative Methods of Research

Questionnaire	Using closed-ended questions or a rating scale where the findings can be counted and observed as statistics.
Content Analysis	Detecting and counting information found in content.
Statistical Analysis	Examining statistics to make generalisations and extrapolate trends.
Observation	Detects and counts observed actions where the data collected can be quantified.

Researching Ethically

- Researching ethically promotes trust that the information collected will be used responsibly and will be treated with respect and confidentiality.
- Researching ethically involves:
 - Treating participants and their information respectfully,
 - Being aware of any of your biases or assumptions and how they may affect your research,
 - Respecting the intellectual property rights of others – don't plagiarise and do cite people's work correctly,
 - Ensuring that research is not offensive or inappropriate.