QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is any which does not involve numbers or numerical data. It often involves words or language, but may also use pictures or photographs and observations. Qualitative analysis results in rich data that gives an in-depth picture and it is particularly useful for exploring how and why things have happened. Qualitative research aids the formulation of hypothesis to be used for deeper exploration or quantification. In a way, it adds richness to the information gathered by quantitative research by understanding instead of measuring.

It is concerned with qualitative phenomenon i.e. phenomena relating to or involving quality or kind. This type of research aims at discovering underlying motives and desires, using in depth interviews for the purpose. Other techniques of such research are word association test, sentence completion test, story completion tests and similar other projective techniques. Attitude or opinion research i.e., research designed to find out how people feel or what they think about a particular subject or institution is also qualitative research.

Sources/Techniques of Qualitative Data

Qualitative research can be carried out by:

1. **Focus Group Discussions:** Focus groups are also known as group interviews or group discussions. They are used to understand the attitude or behaviour of the audience towards the topic for which research is conducted. This is the most effective and preferred technique for qualitative studies. Respondents, in a group of 5-8 people, are made comfortable and asked general questions first. Gradually, the conversation is shifted to the topic of research.

2. **In Depth Interviews:** Personal interviews are conducted instead of focus groups in the following cases:

    - Discussing sensitive, confidential or embarrassing topics (Example: Women's hygiene issues)

    - Requirement of detailed probing (Example: Purchase psychology for an automobile is best done with the respondent one on one)

    - Situations where the respondent may get influenced by the group response (Example: Opinion on TV censorship where social norms prevail)

    - Interviews with highly professional people with busy schedules (Example: Understanding required from doctors on a new medical topic)

3. **Case Studies:** A case study is a detailed study of a specific subject, such as a person, group, place, event, organization, or phenomenon. Case studies are commonly used in social,

educational, clinical, and business research. Case studies are good for describing, comparing, evaluating and understanding different aspects of a research problem.

4. **Literature Review:** A literature review is a survey of scholarly sources on a specific topic. It provides an overview of current knowledge, allowing you to identify relevant theories, methods, and gaps in the existing research. Conducting a literature review involves collecting, evaluating and analyzing publications (such as books and journal articles) that relate to your research question.

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Quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount. It is applicable to phenomena that can be expressed in terms of quantity.

The data produced are always numerical, and they are analyzed using mathematical and statistical methods. If there are no numbers involved, then it's not quantitative research.

For Example, If you wish to carry out statistical analysis of the opinions of a group of people about a particular issue or element of their lives, you can ask them to express their relative agreement with statements and answer on a five- or seven-point scale, where 1 is strongly disagree, 2 is disagree, 3 is neutral, 4 is agree and 5 is strongly agree.

Such scales are called **Likert scales**, and enable statements of opinion to be directly translated into numerical data.

This is particularly useful if you are in an environment where numbers are highly valued and numerical data is considered the 'gold standard'.

However, it is important to note that quantitative methods are not necessarily the most suitable methods for investigation. They are unlikely to be very helpful when you want to understand the detailed reasons for particular behaviour in depth. It is also possible that assigning numbers to fairly theoretical constructs such as personal opinions risks making them false.

Sources/Techniques of Quantitative Data

- **Survey:** Collecting information about a group of people by asking them questions and analyzing the results. A list of closed or multiple choice questions is distributed to a sample (online, in person, or over the phone).

- **Experiments:** An experiment is a type of research method in which you manipulate one or more independent variables and measure their effect on one or more dependent variables.

- **Observations:** Observing people in a natural environment where variables can’t be controlled.

- **Content analysis:** Content analysis is a research method used to identify patterns in recorded communication. To conduct content analysis, you systematically collect data from a set of texts, which can be written, oral, or visual. Content analysis can be both quantitative (focused on counting and measuring) and qualitative (focused on interpreting and understanding).