

Research methods and analysis essay examples

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1. Qualitative and Quantitative Research Approaches

In the realm of research, two major approaches to gathering information and reporting this information exist: quantitative and qualitative approaches. The qualitative approach focuses on comprehending an occurrence from a closer point of view. The quantitative approach on the other hand leans towards an approximation of phenomena from larger numbers of individuals by applying a variety of survey techniques. Each of these approaches has its upside as well as its detriments and areas where it is most suitable. This essay examines the difference between these two approaches using at risk youth to illustrate them.

The first difference between these two approaches lies in the number of respondents. Qualitative research aims to describe a phenomenon in a very comprehensive and in-depth manner. Hence, such a method requires a great investment in both resources and time. Consequently, the number of participants is often small. On the other hand, the quantitative approach aims to define a phenomenon over a bigger number of participants. Hence, a higher number of respondents are used.

For example, in at risk youths, quantitative research may be used to show that youth in gangs are more likely to use drugs than their counterparts who are not in gangs. Thus, a large number of youth; both those in gangs and those not in gangs would participate. A qualitative research on the other hand would focus on the significance of this drug abuse in these people's lives and demonstrate the relationship between this drug use and violence. Hence, a sample would most likely focus on members of a certain gang only. Another difference arises from the techniques applied for collection of data.

In the qualitative research, individual interviews as well as focus groups are the most common techniques. In the case of quantitative research, surveys are the primary data collection method. The reason for this is that quantitative research deals particularly with data of a statistical nature while qualitative research deals with non-statistical data such as feelings. From the gang youths research, it would be difficult to apply statistics to demonstrate influence of drug use on the tendency to violence.

In terms of sampling, the qualitative research sampling is dependent on what information the researcher aims to obtain. In quantitative research however, the focus of sampling is on probability as well as the representativeness of results. This representativeness is important because it ensures that the results obtained may be generalized to the entire population. Thus, in qualitative research, the sample may be taken through the application of key variables. From the example of at risk youth, the variables may include the type of drugs used, gender, and length of gang membership. For the quantitative research, the sample is randomly selected from all the young people fitting a certain age.

In terms of the analysis, qualitative research applies a greater variety in the techniques used in data analysis. The analysis of the data is not statistical in nature and the concrete material in the analyst's possession guides the methodology. The purpose of this analysis is to establish a causal link between two or more variables for instance between drug use and violence in youth gang members. Quantitative research adopts a statistical approach to data analysis with tabulations used to present the results. The nature of the findings is descriptive but is only conclusive within framework that is

numerical in nature.

2. Survey Research Design

Survey research is often misunderstood as an easy approach to research. However, just like all other research approaches, it is possible to conduct a poor quality survey, which has no real benefit. This outcome is a result of the ignorance of ethical pitfalls that may exist in this type of research. This essay looks at the ethical concerns involved in survey research and the major concerns when engaging in research of human subjects while providing measures to take to uphold ethical standards.

Survey research is a method of research most commonly found in social studies research. A survey may generally refer to a selection of quite a large sample of people from an already determined population. This population is known as the population of interest and the researcher then collects small amounts of data from the selected individuals. Hence, in a survey, a researcher applies information from a sample of individuals to infer a conclusion about the larger population.

In doing this, ethical concerns may arise and one of the primary ethical concerns is privacy. It is imperative that a researcher respects the respondent's right to privacy. This means that the researcher must ensure that he or she safeguards any information about another individual that comes into his or her possession. This factor is especially important when such information is of a private nature such as a person's medical records and which if leaked may cause embarrassment. A researcher can do this by ensuring that there is full compliance to all legal requirements relating to protection of information.

Another ethical issue that may arise is that of informed consent. Informed consent means the individual's permission is granted without any undue influence or coercion. This ethical concern is important because a person may be uncomfortable with the use of their information for a certain purpose. Hence, a researcher can overcome this ethical issue by informing a respondent on the purpose of the survey and recording the consent obtained somewhere.

Another ethical concern that presents itself especially relating to human subjects is that of confidentiality. Confidentiality in this case refers to the anonymity or the nondisclosure of the respondent's identity. This element is especially important where the issue under survey is a controversial one such as drug use. The participants in the research must feel that they can speak freely with no fear of the answers leading back to them.

A researcher may ensure confidentiality by encrypting any identifiable data or making use of study codes on documents containing data. These codes would be used instead of recording the identifying information. The researcher would then maintain a separate document linking the study code applied to the identifying information. This document would then be locked away in a secure place.

3. Role of Family on recidivism rates

The family is of critical importance in matters of recidivism and as such, it would provide a good area for conducting a survey research on this. Several variables may be applied in such a survey and they include:

The socio-economic status of the family

The size of the family

Family structure (Whether the family is intact or broken)

Family history of deviance

The socio-economic status of the family may be established by measuring a variety of elements. These elements include the level of education of family members, the occupational status, and the income earned by the family. In terms of the size of the family as a variable, the measure applied may be the number of members of the family. In terms of family structure, the measure may be whether the family has one parent or both. The family history of deviance may be measured by checking how many of the other family members have engaged in criminal acts in the past.

However, several issues relating to validity and reliability may arise with these variables. One of these issues relates to the family socio-economic status and particularly measurement of income. Just asking a single question relating to family income would be likely to result in a lot of missing data. The reason for this is because matters of income are considered highly private and participants may be unwilling to disclose the details. The respondents may also be likely to lie about this hence calling into question the reliability of the data.

Another issue that may affect the validity and reliability of the variables may relate to the family structures. In this regard, the researcher may encounter a problem in defining what a broken or an intact family is. For instance, a broken family may refer to that where the parents are not living together and an intact one to that where they live together. However, this definition

would be overly simplistic since the parents may be living under one roof but not on good terms. Such a home would thus be broken by all accounts. Hence, application of a strict measurement criterion would call into question the reliability of the data.

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