

Example of essay on quantitative vs qualitative data

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The purpose of this paper is to explain the difference between two categories of data, describe conditions under which one data set is selected over the other presenting differing viewpoints, along with a conclusion.

Differentiating Definitions

Quantitative data consists of numbers that can be categorized, ranked, or measured. It's referred by some researchers to "reflect reality" since complex mathematical and statistical modeling can be used (2014). Whereas qualitative data is not collected using a numerical format to ascertain descriptive responses. Words are analyzed to determine how people think or feel about a specific variable (e. g., topic, service, product).

Selecting an Approach

Even though both data types have advantages and disadvantages, one common advantage of quantitative data cited in the literature conveys "strength in numbers" (2011). Because measurable numbers are used, data can be translated effectively through charts, tables, and graphs. This methodology also handles large samples; therefore, size doesn't matter. According to Saul McLeon (2008), qualitative data is difficult to analyze and must be interpreted by a highly skilled professional with expert knowledge. Coding data presents another challenge even though some computer programs are now available to assist with this task.

There are many factors (e. g., purpose, respondents, timeline, cost) to consider when deciding which methodology to use; however expounding on those is beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, when deciding which methodology to choose, if "strength in numbers" is a key factor, choose

quantitative research. If sample size doesn't matter, qualitative research might be best. In social sciences, the “right mix” continues to be argued between advocates for quantitative and advocates for qualitative (2007). Therefore, selection of either continues to be a source controversy when it comes to social science.

References

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