Qualitative Versus Quantitative Research Topics

Distinguish qualitative and quantitative research topics

Listed below are three examples of research topics. Based on your readings and classroom discussions try identifying each of the following topics either they are quantitative or qualitative in terms of their design and answer the questions given below:

1. Consumer motivations for content creation in online social networking explore users' unconscious motivations in semi-structured interviews including techniques like word association and sentence completion. 24 participants will be chosen based on contribution frequency [high, medium and low] and gender. [Lucy Miller, Marketing, Macquarie University]
2. Are organizations' decisions about adopting social media for external communication more influenced by institutional pressures rather than driven by economic factors? Content analysis of four online social media followed by telephone interviews with key personnel. [Kim MacKenzie, Accounting, Queensland University of Technology]
3. The role of trust and distrust in relationships between two business organizations is based on the assumption that trust is influenced by the personalities of the employees involved. Interviews with 65 pairs of individuals in contact with each other while working for different firms. [Angelos Kostis, Umeå School of Business and Economics]

1. Which of these topics and designs are best suited to qualitative research?

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2. Which are better suited to quantitative research?

Are organizations' decisions about adopting social media for external communication more influenced by institutional pressures rather than driven by economic factors? Content analysis of four online social media followed by telephone interviews with key personnel. [Kim MacKenzie, Accounting, Queensland University of Technology]

3. Suggest ways to redefine the topic and/or research design in a manner suited to qualitative research

There is no uniform structure for designing the qualitative study. Different books of qualitative research have demonstrated different designs of qualitative research.

Some research scholars believe that through reading a study, discussing the procedures, and pointing out issues that emerge, the aspiring qualitative researcher will have a sense of how to conduct this form of inquiry (Weis & Fine, 2000).

That may look true to some researchers but others, consider the understanding broader issues depending on-ground experience may suffice to help design a study (Morse & Richards, 2002.

So, there is two approaches and a researcher has to opt between using his/her experiences, or depending on information from books.

They are three components of designing a qualitative study; preliminary considerations that is before the study, the steps engaged in during the conduct of the study, and the elements that flow through all phases of the process of the research.

Preliminary Considerations

At this stage, there are certain principles to be put into consideration during designing qualitative research studies. Qualitative research and quantitative research are scientific methods; they share common steps in conducting research; problem statement, the hypotheses, data collection, the results, and the discussion.

Researcher scholars start with a problem, examine the literature in some way related to the problem, ask questions, collect data and analyze them, end up with writing reports.

Qualitative research uses different theories depending on the kind of study. For example, cultural theories from the basic building blocks of a good qualitative ethnography (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999), whereas in grounded theory, the theories are developed during the process of research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It varies considerably from scientific-oriented approaches to literary storytelling, and on to performances, such as theater, plays, or poems. There is no one standard or accepted structure as one typically finds in quantitative research.

Finally, researchers sometimes are motivated by their background and interest in engaging themselves in research. Researchers have a personal history that situates them as inquirers. They also have an orientation to research and a sense of personal ethics and political stances that inform their research. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) refer to the researchers as a “multicultural subject” (p. 12) and view the history, traditions, and conceptions of self, ethics, and politics as a starting point for inquiry.

Steps in the Process

At this step a researcher first acknowledges the broad assumptions that bring them to qualitative inquiry, and the interpretive lens that will be used. In addition, then come up with a topic after having reviewed the literature about the topic and can confidently say that a problem exists that needs to be studied. This problem may be one in the “real world,” or it may be a deficiency or gap in the literature or past investigations on a topic, or both. Problems in

qualitative research span the topics in the social and human sciences, and a hallmark of qualitative research today is the deep involvement in issues of gender, culture, and marginalized groups. The topics about which we write are emotion-laden, close to people, and practical.

In studying topics, the researcher need to pose open-ended research questions, must listen carefully to the participants that being studied. These questions will change and become more refined during the process of research to reflect an increased understanding of the problem.

Researchers need to collect a variety of sources of data that is in form of words or images, targeting four basic sources of qualitative information: interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials. Then after organizing and storing the data, the next activity is to analyze them carefully. Analyze the qualitative data working inductively from particulars to more general perspectives, whether these perspectives are called codes, categories, themes, or dimensions. Then work deductively to gather evidence to support the themes and the interpretations.