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COURSE TOPIC:  
**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Research methodology is the channel and medium through which researchers conduct their research. This channel shows the path through which these researchers collate their problem and objective and then present their results from the type of data gathered or obtained during the period of study. Research methodology also reveals how the research outcome at the end will be obtained; this will be in line with meeting the objective of the said study.

This essay hence discusses the research methods that were used during the research process which includes the research methodology of the study from the research strategy to the result dissemination. Furthermore, in this essay, I shall outline the research strategy, research design, research methodology, the study area, data sources such as primary data sources and secondary data.

I will also show data collection methods like; primary data collection methods which includes place of work observation data collection and data collection via desk review, data collection through questionnaires, data obtained from experts' opinion, secondary data collection methods, methods of data analysis used such as quantitative data analysis and qualitative data analysis, data analysis software, the reliability and validity analysis of the quantitative data, and reliability of data.

So, in order to satisfy the purpose of this essay, a qualitative and quantitative research method is discussed in general. The study used these approaches because the data were collected from all types of the data source during the study period. Therefore, the purpose of this essay and methodology is to satisfy the research plan and goals targeted by the researcher.

## **2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Definitions**

According to Paperpile, “A research methodology encompasses the way in which you intend to carry out your research. This includes how you plan to tackle things like collection methods, statistical analysis, participant observations, and more. You can think of your research methodology as being a formula. One part will be how you plan on putting your research into practice and another will be why you feel this is the best way to approach it. Your research methodology is ultimately a methodological and systematic plan to resolve your research problem”. (Paperpile, n.d.)

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More specifically, it shows how a researcher systematically designs a study to ensure valid and reliable results which addresses the research aims and objectives.

A good example will be how did the researcher go about deciding on the following:

- What data to collect and what data to ignore
- Who to collect the data from otherwise known as sampling design
- How to collect the data which is called data collection methods
- How to analyse the data collected which is known as data analysis methods

Furthermore, the research methodology should justify the design choices, by showing that, the chosen methods and techniques are the best fit for the research aims and objectives, and that it will provide a valid and reliable results. A good research methodology will provide scientifically and sound findings, whereas a poor methodology does not.



### 3.0 TYPES OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The different types of research methodologies are; qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods.

#### 3.1 Qualitative Research Methodology



(QuestionPro, n.d.)

*(Figure 1: Qualitative Research Methodology)*

Qualitative research is a type of research methodology which focuses on collecting and analysing words written or spoken and also textual data.

This is based on the disciplines of social sciences like psychology, sociology, and anthropology which allow for further questioning, where the researcher tries to understand their motivation and feelings. Moreover, understanding how your audience takes decisions helps in deriving conclusions in market research.

### 3.2 Quantitative Research Methodology



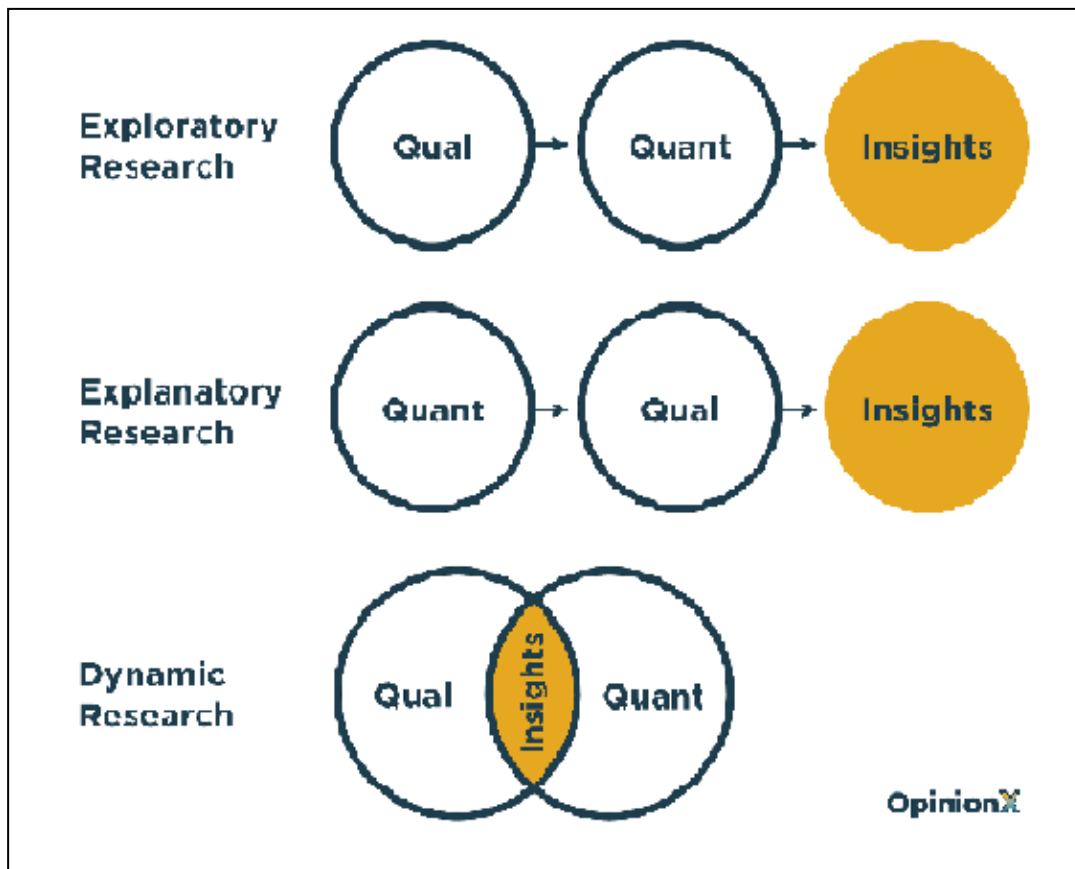
*(Pedamkar, n.d.)*

*(Figure 2: Types of Quantitative Research)*

A quantitative research methodology is used when the research aims and objectives are confirmatory in nature.

For example, it might be used to measure the relationship between two variables such as; personality type and likelihood to commit a crime. It is targeted specifically on numerical data and the general structure for quantitative research is predicted on the scientific approach which uses the tactic and method of aggregation for sharing analysis and conclusions.

### 3.3 Mixed-method Research Methodology



(Kyne, n.d.)

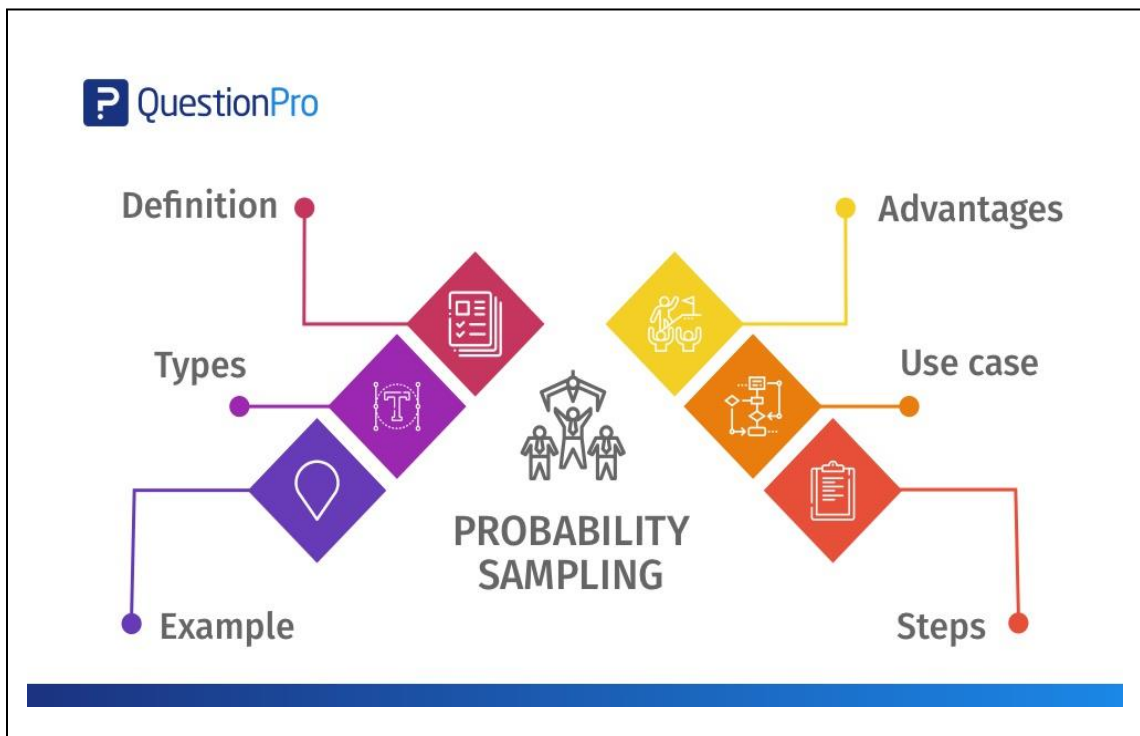
(Figure 3: Mixed-method Research Methodology)

As the name implies, Mixed Methods Research is a type of user research that combines qualitative and quantitative methods. This type of methodology attempts to combine the best of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to create a rich picture with actionable statistics for deeper user insights.

## 4.0 SAMPLING DESIGN APPROACHES

There are different types of sampling options, but the two main categories of sampling design are; probability sampling and non-probability sampling. As I have mentioned earlier, sampling design is all about deciding who you are going to collect your data from, i.e., your sample.

### 4.1 Probability Sampling

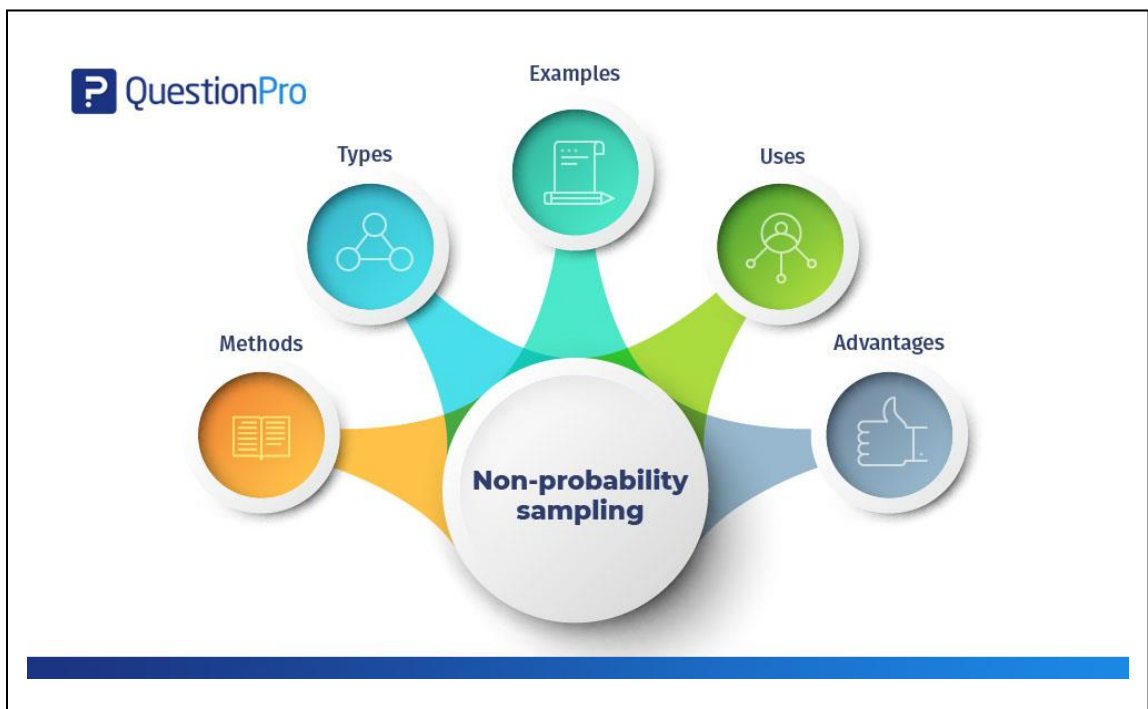


(QuestionPro, Probability sampling: Definition, types, examples, steps and advantages, n.d.)

(Figure 4: Probability Sampling)

This is the use of a complete random sample from the group of people you're interested in otherwise known as the population. By using this type of random sample, the results of your study will be generalized to the entire population. What that one means is that, you can expect the same results across the entire group without having to collect data from the entire group, this is often not possible for larger groups.

## 4.2 Non-probability Sampling



(QuestionPro, Non-Probability Sampling: Definition, types, Examples, and advantages, n.d.)

*(Figure 5: Non-probability sampling)*

Contrary to probability sampling, Non-probability Sampling does not use a random sample. This simply means that, it might involve using a convenience sample, which means you will survey people that you have access to such as; friends, family or work colleagues rather than a truly random sample and with non-probability sampling, the results are typically not generalized.

## 5.0 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The choice of which data collection method to use depends solely on the overall research aims and objectives. If the research is exploratory in nature, qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups would likely be a very good option.

On the other hand, if the research aims to measure specific variables or test hypotheses, then large-scale surveys that produce large volumes of numerical data would be a better option to use.

There are various options as regards how you go about collecting data but the main options be grouped into the following types:

- Interviews (unstructured, semi-structured or structured)
- Focus groups and group interviews
- Surveys (online or physical surveys)
- Observations
- Documents and records
- Case studies



## **6.0 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS**

Data analysis methods in research This can be classified into the following; Qualitative content analysis, Thematic analysis, Discourse analysis and Narrative analysis

### **6.1 Qualitative Content Analysis**

This focuses on documented human manuscripts, voice recordings and journals. It investigates the written, spoken and visual artefacts without necessarily extracting data from participants; this process is called unobtrusive research. With content analysis, you don't necessarily need to interact with participants but you can simply analyse the data that they have already produced such as; text messages, books, Facebook posts, videos, and audio.

Furthermore, there are two types of content analysis namely; conceptual and relational content analysis. Conceptual analysis focuses on the number of times a concept occurs in a set of data while Relational content analysis focuses more on implicit data in terms of context and relationships. The three types of relational analysis are; Affect extraction, Proximity analysis and Cognitive mapping.

### **6.1.1 When to use qualitative content analysis**

Content analysis is used in studies where the aim is to better understand factors such as behaviours, attitudes, values, emotions, and opinions. For example, you could use it to investigate an issue in society, such as miscommunication between cultures. It can also be used on a publication such as a book where you could gather data on the themes, topics and also draw conclusions regarding the political leanings of the publication.

### **6.1.2 How to conduct a qualitative content analysis**

- Recap on your research questions
- Undertake bracketing to identify biases
- Develop a coding scheme
- Code the data and undertake your analysis

## **6.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

This is the study of patterns of meaning by analysing the themes within your data set to identify meaning driven by your research questions. However, it is not compulsory to figure out every theme in the data, but to focus on the key aspects that relate to the research questions.

It is very important to remember that these questions are not necessarily fixed and as thematic analysis tends to be a kind of an exploratory process, research questions can surface as you progress with your coding and theme identification.

### **6.2.1 When to you use thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis is highly beneficial when working with large bodies of data, as this will allow you to divide and categorise large amounts of data in a way and manner that makes it far easier to understand. This type of analysis is useful when looking for information such as a participant's experiences, views, and opinions.

It is a good option when you want to categorise large bodies of data and when you are interested in subjective experiences.

### **6.2.2 Thematic analysis main approaches**

- The inductive approach
- The deductive approach
- The semantic approach
- The latent approach

### **6.2.3 Types of thematic analysis**

- Coding reliability thematic analysis
- Codebook thematic analysis
- Reflexive thematic analysis

### **6.2.4 How to Conduct thematic analysis**

- Get familiar with the data
- Codes pattern search
- Review themes
- Finalise Themes
- Produce your report

## **6.3 Discourse Analysis**

This is one of the most popular qualitative analysis techniques, discourse analysis is a verbal or written communication between people that goes beyond a single sentence. However, it is more than just a language, which can include all forms of linguistic and symbolic units such as; road signs and language studies can focus on the individual interpretations of words. It can also be used to determine how language is used to express different opinions on financial inequality and how this inequality is seen as such by the participants.

### 6.3.1 When to use discourse analysis

There are various ways to analyse qualitative data such as; content analysis, narrative analysis and thematic analysis.

However, the purpose of discourse analysis is to investigate the functions of language, that is, what language is used for and how meaning is constructed in different contexts.

Discourse analysis also reveals a lot about power and imbalances which includes; how it is developed, maintained, how it plays out in real life. For example, you could examine the way and manner that someone with more power such as a CEO of a certain organization speaks to somebody with less power such as a lower-level employee in the same organization.

As it were, you may want to consider discourse analysis if you are researching any of the following:

- Some form of power or inequality - *how wealthy individuals interact and relates with those who are less wealthy*
- How people communicate in a particular context - *social situation with colleagues versus a board meeting*
- Ideology and how ideas are shared using language - *like in political speeches*
- Communication in achieving goals - *such as navigating a conflict*

As stated above, we could see that, discourse analysis can be a powerful tool for assessing social issues and power imbalances. So, if research aims and objectives are centered around these types of issues then discourse analysis could be a perfect option to use.

### **6.3.2 Discourse Analysis main approaches**

The two main approaches to discourse analysis are; the language-in-use which is also known as socially situated text and talk approaches and the socio-political approaches.

#### **Language-in-use approach**

This type of approach focuses on the finer details of language used within discourse such as; sentence structures (grammar) and phonology (sounds). It pays attention to different rules of communication when something sounds okay to a native speaker of a language.

#### **Socio-political approach**

This type of approach looks beyond the technicalities of language and instead focus on the influence that language has in social context, and vice versa. Critical Discourse Analysis happened to be one of the main socio-political approaches which focuses on power structures and how discourse is determined by the society and their culture.

### **6.3.3 How to conduct Discourse Analysis**

- Determine your discourse analysis approach
- Design collection method
- Determine how to gather data
- Investigate the context
- Analyse your data
- Review your work

### **6.4 Narrative analysis**

This is used by researchers to get an in-depth understanding of how research participants develop story and narrative based on their own personal experience. Which means that, there is a double layer of interpretation in narrative analysis. Firstly, the research participants interpret their own lives through narrative, then the researcher interprets the construction of such narrative.

The said narratives can be derived from journals, letters, conversations, autobiographies, transcripts or other types of narrative qualitative research and then used it in narrative research.

### **6.4.1 Examples of personal narratives**

#### **Topical stories**

A story about one specific moment in time with a character but does not encompass the entirety of a person's life. For example; a research participant's answer to a single interview question

#### **Personal narrative**

This comes from a long interview which gives an extended account of someone's life. For example; a researcher conducting an interview with an individual over an extended period of time.

#### **Entire life story**

This is constructed from a collection of interviews, observations and documents concerning a person's life. For example; a historian putting together the biography of someone's life from past documented artifacts.



## 7.0 CONCLUSION

As I have highlighted previously in this essay, your research aims and objectives have a major influence on the research methodology. So, it would be rightly said that, the starting point for developing a research methodology is to take a look at the bigger picture of such research before actually taking a methodology decision about it. You then need to ask yourself whether your research is going to be exploratory or confirmatory in nature.

If your research aims and objectives are primarily exploratory in nature then your research will likely be qualitative. Therefore, you may want to consider qualitative data collection methods such as; interviews and analysis methods such as; qualitative content analysis.

Contrarily, if your research aims and objective are towards looking to measure or test something, that is, confirmatory, then your research will likely be quantitative in nature, which will definitely make you to consider quantitative data collection methods such as; surveys and analysis such as; statistical analysis.

Moreover, how to design your research and to work out your methodology is quite an extensive topic; however, the key takeaway is that you should always try as much as possible to start with your research aims and objectives, then every methodology decision will flow rightly from that.

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