

Problems in Research: Quantitative & Qualitative Methods

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Objective	Subjective
Quantitative research focuses on numerical data that is repeatable.	Qualitative research tries to understand problems in greater detail.

Quantitative Research Problems

Many people criticize quantitative research because the researchers have little ability to find out more detail. For example:

Many quantitative research methods use questionnaires as a way of finding out percentages of the population that have certain kinds of characteristics – or that think certain things. Imagine if a questionnaire asked if you wanted to vote for Republicans or Democrats. However, someone answering this question might want to vote for the Green Party, but the survey does *not* provide that option. In this quantitative study, they must choose between either Republican or Democrat – and nothing else. This is very limited because it only measures two parties. Thus, if 10 percent of people who answered Democrat actually preferred Greens, then a massive trend will be missed because of the limited survey.

The rigid limits of quantitative research can result in relevant factors or issues being completely missed. Qualitative research would catch this discrepancy by using open-ended questions.

Qualitative Research: Being Subjective

[Subjectivity](#) is a hallmark of qualitative research and it is one of its flaws. For example, the subjective nature of information from interviews, and from case studies, means that they are open to misinterpretation and observer [bias](#). For example, if you are conducting an interview, to investigate whether prisoners had abusive childhoods, then observer bias could happen because interviewees could exaggerate the negative aspects of their childhoods, to get sympathy or justification. Subjectivity is an issue when analyzing data, because in qualitative research, data must be interpreted. Researchers could accidentally interpret data to prove what they want (that is called bias). With quantitative data, that is not as easy to do.

Qualitative Research: Difficult to extrapolate

As a result of the (1) subjective nature of qualitative research and (2) its level of detail and (3) its relatively small sample size – you cannot [generalize](#) qualitative findings to everyone. On the other hand, quantitative research can easily generalize data because it can convert its finding into

percentages and other math expressions that can be [extrapolated](#). Unfortunately, the answers that qualitative research produces make them difficult to generalize or to extrapolate to the [population-at-large](#). The level of detail in each qualitative study also means that fewer people are studied, which therefore makes the participants a less accurate representation of the entire population.

Reference

Johnson, L. (2018). *Problems in research: Quantitative & qualitative methods*. Classroom Synonym. <https://classroom.synonym.com/problems-research-quantitative-qualitative-methods-4418.html>