Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Explain the purpose of descriptive research.
2. Describe the use of correlational research.
3. Compare and contrast qualitative and quantitative methods.
4. Distinguish types of research sources.
5. Compare and contrast case studies, ethnographies, and historical research.
6. Create the appendices for a research proposal.

Written Lecture

In this unit, the chapter readings focus on nonexperimental research. Chapter 9 begins the discussion of the different types of research designs and methodological approaches with two nonexperimental approaches: Descriptive and Correlational. Chapter 10 describes the qualitative method, the third nonexperimental approach of conducting research.

There are many descriptive research designs, categorized into either Observational Research or Surveys/Interviews. In observational research the aim is to observe the study sample either in their environment or in the laboratory. In Surveys/interview types the aim is to collect data from the subject. The latter is commonly performed as face-to-face interview, telephone survey, direct computer, and questionnaire survey.

Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages. The deciding factor on which survey method to employ will depend on the sampling precision or control, the available budget and anticipated cost, the quality of data required for the study, length of questionnaire and the quantity of data needed, the necessity of having a respondent perform certain specialized tasks, incident rate of response that is needed, the degree of questionnaire structure, available time to complete the survey, and, finally, the potential for respondent/interviewer bias.

One aspect of the descriptive method that differs markedly from other methods is that it does not include a treatment or control group.

Correlational research describes the relationship between two or more variables, without suggesting the direction or cause of the effect of one variable on the other. Correlational studies are quantitative and multi-subject designs. Study participants have not been randomly assigned to treatment conditions.

Statistical methods include multiple regression analysis, canonical correlation analysis, hierarchical linear modeling, and structural equation modeling. Correlational designs do not provide the best evidence regarding causal mechanisms. However, using logic and theory, the researcher attempts to rule out all reasonable alternative explanations in support of making a single plausible causal inference.
Qualitative research takes place within social and political settings in an effort to explore the processes that underlie human behavior. Techniques, such as observations, focus groups, and case studies are discussed. In addition, primary and secondary sources used in historical research are covered, as well as the issues surrounding the accuracy/authenticity of such sources. Each of the nonexperimental research methods have inherent errors associated with them. One is random error and the other is systematic error. Increasing sample size can only reduce random error in nonexperimental research design. However, systematic error can be addressed through minimizing sample design and measurement error.

Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Follow the link below to the Pearson Companion Website, and complete the Practice Test and Applications 9.1 and 9.2:

Follow the link below to the Pearson Companion Website, and complete the Practice Test and Applications 10.1 and 10.2: