Research Questions, Approaches and Instruments in Gender Studies

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Outline

- Research questions
  - Overview and example
- Research approaches and instruments
  - Overview and example
- Practice

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Research Questions

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Definition

- A RESTATEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVE(S)/TS/HYPOTHESIS (S) IN THE INTERROGATIVE MODE

- THEY SHOULD BE ANSWERABLE & RESEARCHABLE QUESTIONS
  - "Answerable" implies that you should have the resources, skills and tools via which you can elicit data to answer those questions

  - "Researchable" implies that the answers to the questions should require some type of field work and data collection; for example, in a study about the issue of cheating in exams, a researchable question should not what does cheating mean? The answer to this question requires doing readings and synthesizing information from those readings. A section about the definition of cheating in exams will be included within the chapter of the review of literature. However, a question like " to what extent do students cheat during exams? " is a researchable question as it requires collecting data.

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- An organizing element for topic under study

- They answer the questions: *What do I want to know about by my topic?*
  - Remember that possible research questions for any topic are endless!!! = Be specific

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Significance

- Focus your investigation into a narrow topic area and guides every aspect of research project, including:
  1. **Literature review**: your readings will focus on the issues raised by your questions
  2. **Methodology**: The sample, the approaches & instruments: qualitative or quantitative (Quantitative questions lean toward numerical results while qualitative questions lean toward more open descriptions)

  Quantitative questions: *Who code-switch more?* Males or females?

  Qualitative questions: Why do the group code-switch more than the other?

  Both qualitative and quantitative

  3. **Data analysis**

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Types of questions

- Types of Questions depend on:
  - Research problem: Individuals, environment, courses of action and possible outcomes
  - Thesis statement and hypothesis
  - The objective(s): (Formulative, Descriptive (what, who, when…), Diagnostic (frequency, reasons, impacts…), hypothesis testing
- Types of questions:
  - Descriptive
  - Relational
  - Causal

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Introduction components	Content
Rational of the study/ motives	General statement presenting the issue Why is it a problem? Your motives behind the choice of the topic The arguments supporting the choice of the problem+ the importance of the topic (facts, studies…etc)
The objective	Why the study is important
Thesis statement or hypothesis statement	Interpretation /Assumption
Research questions	What to answer
*Thesis blueprint	How the thesis will be organized

Example

- To illustrate, let's say you are working on a study about the sexual harassment in public transportation

Your research problem: **Why are women sexually harassed in public transportation?**

- An individual/ group or organization to whom the problem can be attributed: Female university students
- The environment to which the difficulty pertains: Public transportation in Fez
- At least two or more courses of action, reasons, explanations, factors,…etc: Men's misconduct, lack of implementation of legislative laws, lack of morals and values, sexual oppression, SH as a normalized, dress code, objectifying women's bodies
- At least two possible outcomes of the course of action: Fear of the public spaces, increased gender discrimination, male dominant spaces

The objective of the study: The study aims to investigate the issue of sexual harassment in public transportation in Fes. It is an attempt to determine the reasons behind and the impacts of sexual harassment on women.

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- Research questions
  1. To what extent do women face sexual harassment in public transportation in Fez?
  2. What are the profiles of the females facing sexual harassment in public transportation in Fez?
  3. What are the profiles of the male harassers?
  4. In which means of public transportation are women harassed the most?
  5. What are the types of sexual harassment faced?
  6. What are the factors behind sexual harassment?
  7. What are the impacts of sexual harassment?

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The types of questions:

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 are descriptive

Questions 5 and 6 are causal

If you are to test a relationship between two specific variables, a relational question should be added (e.g: is there a relationship between the implementation of legislative laws and the increasing rates of sexual harassment)

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- **In terms of how the research questions help you with the review of the literature, your readings will focus on the items raised by your questions in general: the prevalence of the issue, the factors, the impacts, the legislative laws**

- **In terms of how the research questions help you identify the research approaches and the data collection procedures to be used:**

The study uses both the qualitative and the quantitative approaches:

  - Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 can be quantitative questions; thus, they require the use of quantitative data collection procedures to elicit data.
  - Questions 5, 6 and can be both quantitative and qualitative; thus, they require the use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures.

There is not a clear-cut rule though. You can approach an issue solely from either the quantitative or the qualitative approaches (this again depends on other factors e.g: size/accessibility sample population for example)

- **In terms of how the research questions help you with data analysis, the sections to be included in your analysis chapter should mirror those research questions**
  - **Your qualitative and quantitative findings should be analyzed in the light of your research questions**

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Research Approches & Instruments

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Research approaches	Data collection instruments
The approach or approaches opted for in a research paper depend on : The objectives of the study, the research hypothesis and questions to be addressed The type of research conducted : exploratory, descriptive, analytical, experimental…etc The size of the population The accessibility and degree of collaboration of the participants	The choice of data collection procedures depends on : The research objectives, hypothesis and research questions The type of research conducted The approach (es) opted for The size of the population The accessibility and degree of collaboration of the participants

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Types of approaches	Types of instruments
The Quantitative approach aims for the generation of data in a quantitative way and for the analysis of that data in percentages and frequencies. The Qualitative approach aims to investigate attitudes, opinions and behaviors and to process and analyze them qualitatively. Mixed methods approach implies the use of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. It usually involves the use of more than two data collection procedures (Triangulation) for the purpose of cross-checking and assuring the validity of the findings.	Qualitative data collection procedures: interviews, focus groups, projective techniques (Association techniques, completion techniques, construction techniques and expressive techniques), content analysis, discourse analysis, observation (participant and non participant observation), document reviews, biographies, longitudenal studies Quantitative data collection procedures: questionnaire, testing, experiments and quantitative observations

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	Quantitative	Qualitative
General framework	Seek to confirm hypotheses about phenomena Instruments use more rigid style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions Use highly structured methods such as questionnaires, surveys, and structured observation	Seek to explore phenomena Instruments use more flexible, interactive style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions Use semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation
Analytical objectives	To quantify variation To predict causal relationships To describe characteristics of a population	To describe variation To describe and explain relationships To describe individual experiences To describe group norms
Question format	Closed-ended	Open-ended
Data format	Numerical (obtained by assigning numerical values to responses)	Textual (obtained from audiotapes, videotapes, and field notes)
Flexibility in study design	Study design is stable from beginning to end Participant responses do not influence or determine how and which questions researchers ask next Study design is subject to statistical assumptions and conditions	Some aspects of the study are flexible (for example, the addition, exclusion, or wording of particular interview questions) Participant responses affect how and which questions researchers ask next Study design is iterative, that is, data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learn

Research approach section	Research instruments section
The approach (es) chosen The justification for the choice of the approach (es)	The data collection procedures The type of data each one will enable you to collect The justification for the choice of the data collection procedure

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Example

- To illustrate, let's say you are working on a study about the exploitation of little girls as servants/maids
  - **Research approach:**

    Since the size of the sample is very limited and barely accessibly and since the study mainly aims to investigate the reasons why underage girls are exploited as little maids in the city of Fez, the study opts for the qualitative approach.
  - **Data collection procedures**: The data collection procedure to be used in this study is the interview guide. In this study, interviews will help in determining the profiles of the girls who are mostly hired as maids, the circumstance under which they work, the different factors behind and the impacts of their exploitation as little maids

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PRACTICE

- Determine the research questions, approaches and instruments for the following research topics:

Attitudes towards single-sex schools
Underage marriage

What are the questions you can address in each research topic?
What is/are the approach(es) more appropriate to use?why?
What is/are the instrument (s) you can use?

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