

SOC301

METHODS FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH



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- **Course code: SOC 301**
- **Course title: Methods for Social Research**
- **Course credit load: 4**

SERIES 1: Foundations of Social Research Methods

Series outline

- **Part 1.1: Nature and Purpose of Social Research**
 - 1.1.1: Meaning and scope of social research
 - 1.1.2: Objectives and significance of studying human societies
 - 1.1.3: Role of research in knowledge generation
- **Part 1.2: Forms and Strategies of Research**
 - 1.2.1: Descriptive and non-descriptive approaches
 - 1.2.2: Historical research strategies
 - 1.2.3: Comparative overview of research designs
- **Part 1.3: Types of Research Methods**
 - 1.3.1: Quantitative methods: survey, comparative study, quasi-experiment
 - 1.3.2: Qualitative methods: focus group, in-depth interview, ethnography, case study
 - 1.3.3: Advantages and disadvantages of methods
- **Part 1.4: Evaluating and Justifying Research Choices**
 - 1.4.1: Strengths and weaknesses of different methods
 - 1.4.2: Criteria for selecting appropriate methods
 - 1.4.3: Justification for combining methods
- **Part 1.5: Ethics and Integrity in Social Research**
 - 1.5.1: Importance of integrity in data collection
 - 1.5.2: Adherence to ethics in research practice
 - 1.5.3: Objectivity in design, data processing, and interpretation

Introduction

Social research provides the foundation for understanding how human beings live, interact, and organise themselves in diverse societies. Without systematic inquiry, our knowledge of social life would remain fragmented and speculative. This Series introduces you to the essential principles and strategies of social research, preparing you to appreciate both the breadth and depth of methods available for studying human behaviour and social structures.



The aim of this Series is to equip you with a clear grasp of the fundamental concepts, designs, and approaches in social research, while also guiding you to evaluate their strengths, weaknesses, and ethical implications.

We shall commence this Series by examining the nature and purpose of social research, highlighting its meaning, scope, and role in knowledge generation. Next, we will explore the forms and strategies of research, including descriptive, non-descriptive, and historical approaches. Subsequently, we will study the different types of research methods, distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative techniques and considering their advantages and disadvantages. Following that, we will evaluate and justify research choices by analysing the strengths and weaknesses of methods and the criteria for selecting them. Finally, we will wrap up by focusing on ethics and integrity in social research, emphasising the importance of objectivity, adherence to ethical standards, and credibility in the entire research process.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** define the meaning and scope of social research,
- **SLO 1.2** explain the objectives and significance of studying human societies through research,
- **SLO 1.3** describe the role of social research in generating knowledge,
- **SLO 1.4** distinguish between descriptive, non-descriptive, and historical research strategies,
- **SLO 1.5** analyse the comparative strengths and weaknesses of different research designs,
- **SLO 1.6** identify and explain key quantitative methods such as survey, comparative study, and quasi-experiment,
- **SLO 1.7** identify and explain key qualitative methods such as focus group discussion, in-depth interview, ethnography, and case study,
- **SLO 1.8** evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of both quantitative and qualitative methods,
- **SLO 1.9** assess the criteria for selecting appropriate research methods and justify their use in different contexts, and
- **SLO 1.10** apply principles of integrity, ethics, and objectivity in the design, data collection, processing, and interpretation of social research.

1.1 Nature And Purpose Of Social Research

1.1.1 Meaning and scope of social research



Social research refers to the systematic study of human behaviour, social structures, and interactions within societies. It involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting data to generate knowledge about how people live, organise themselves, and respond to various social conditions. The **scope** of social research is broad, covering areas such as family life, education, politics, religion, economics, and cultural practices. By applying structured methods, researchers aim to move beyond personal opinions or assumptions to produce credible and scientific insights.

Fill in the blank: Social research is the systematic study of _____ behaviour, social structures, and interactions.

Diagram showing the scope of social research across different domains (family, education, politics, economy, culture). *Caption: Figure 1.1 Scope of social research*

1.1.2 Objectives and significance of studying human societies

The **objectives** of social research include describing social phenomena, explaining relationships between variables, predicting future trends, and evaluating social policies. These objectives help scholars and policymakers to make informed decisions. The **significance** lies in its ability to provide evidence-based knowledge that can improve social conditions, reduce inequalities, and promote development. For example, surveys on education can reveal disparities in access, while ethnographic studies can highlight cultural practices that shape community life.

Fill in the blank: One major objective of social research is to _____ social phenomena and explain relationships between variables.

Box 1.1 Objectives of social research

1.1.3 Role of research in knowledge generation

The **role of research** is to transform observations into structured knowledge. By applying rigorous methods, researchers ensure that findings are reliable, valid, and applicable to wider contexts. Social research contributes to theory building, policy formulation, and practical interventions. It also challenges existing assumptions, offering new perspectives on social issues. Without research, knowledge would remain anecdotal and fragmented.

Fill in the blank: The role of social research is to transform _____ into structured knowledge.

Image of a researcher conducting interviews in a community setting. *Caption: Plate 1.1 Fieldwork as a source of knowledge generation*

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Which term refers to the systematic study of human behaviour and social structures?
2. What is one major objective of social research?
3. Why is social research significant for policymakers?
4. What is the role of social research in knowledge generation?
5. Fill in the blank: Social research ensures that findings are _____ and valid.



1.2 Forms And Strategies Of Research

1.2.1 Descriptive and non-descriptive approaches

Descriptive research is a method that aims to present an accurate picture of a phenomenon by observing and recording details without manipulating variables. It focuses on describing characteristics such as behaviours, attitudes, or social conditions. In contrast, **non-descriptive research** seeks to go beyond description by testing relationships, exploring causes, or predicting outcomes. While descriptive studies provide a snapshot of reality, non-descriptive approaches allow researchers to probe deeper into why and how social phenomena occur.

Fill in the blank: _____ research aims to present an accurate picture of a phenomenon without manipulating variables.

Diagram comparing descriptive and non-descriptive research approaches. *Caption: Figure 1.2 Comparison of descriptive and non-descriptive research*

1.2.2 Historical research strategies

Historical research involves the study of past events, records, and documents to understand social phenomena in their historical context. It relies on sources such as archives, official records, newspapers, and oral histories. The strength of historical research lies in its ability to trace developments over time and explain how past events shape present realities. However, its weakness is the potential bias or incompleteness of historical records.

Fill in the blank: Historical research relies on sources such as _____, official records, newspapers, and oral histories.

Image of a researcher examining archival documents. *Caption: Plate 1.2 Archival research as a historical strategy*

1.2.3 Comparative overview of research designs

Research designs provide the framework for conducting studies. Common designs include **descriptive studies**, which focus on observing and recording phenomena, **experimental studies**, which involve manipulating variables to test cause-and-effect relationships, and **cross-sectional designs**, which study groups at a single point in time. Each design has strengths and weaknesses, and the choice depends on the research problem. For example, descriptive studies are useful for exploring new areas, while experimental studies are better suited for testing hypotheses.

Fill in the blank: _____ studies involve manipulating variables to test cause-and-effect relationships.

Caption: Table 1.1 Strengths and weaknesses of research designs

Pilot questions 1.2

1. Which type of research focuses on presenting an accurate picture of a phenomenon without manipulation?



2. What is one major weakness of historical research?
3. Which research design is best suited for testing cause-and-effect relationships?
4. Fill in the blank: Cross-sectional designs study groups at a single _____ in time.
5. Why might descriptive studies be useful in exploring new areas of research?

1.3 Types Of Research Methods

1.3.1 Quantitative methods: survey, comparative study, quasi-experiment

Quantitative research methods are approaches that rely on numerical data and statistical analysis to study social phenomena. A **survey** is a structured method of collecting information from a large group of people using questionnaires or interviews. A **comparative study** examines similarities and differences between groups, societies, or time periods. A **quasi-experiment** involves testing cause-and-effect relationships without full experimental control, often used when random assignment is not possible. These methods are valued for their ability to produce measurable results and generalisable findings.

Fill in the blank: A _____ is a structured method of collecting information from a large group of people using questionnaires or interviews.

Diagram showing three branches of quantitative methods: survey, comparative study, quasi-experiment. *Caption: Figure 1.3 Quantitative research methods*

1.3.2 Qualitative methods: focus group, in-depth interview, ethnography, case study

Qualitative research methods focus on gathering non-numerical data to explore meanings, experiences, and social processes. A **focus group discussion** involves guided conversations with a small group to explore collective views. An **in-depth interview** is a one-on-one conversation designed to uncover detailed personal perspectives. **Ethnography** is the immersive study of people in their natural settings, often involving long-term observation. A **case study** examines a single unit such as an individual, group, or institution in detail. These methods are useful for capturing rich insights that numbers alone cannot provide.

Fill in the blank: _____ is the immersive study of people in their natural settings, often involving long-term observation.

Image of a researcher participating in community life as part of ethnographic study. *Caption: Plate 1.3 Ethnography as a qualitative method*

1.3.3 Advantages and disadvantages of methods

Each research method has its **advantages** and **disadvantages**. Quantitative methods are advantageous because they allow for statistical analysis, generalisation, and replication. However, they may overlook the depth of human experiences. Qualitative methods provide rich, detailed insights into social life, but they can be time-consuming and less generalisable. The choice of method depends on the research problem, resources, and the type of data required.

Fill in the blank: Quantitative methods are advantageous because they allow for _____ analysis, generalisation, and replication.



Caption: Table 1.2 Advantages and disadvantages of research methods

Pilot questions 1.3

1. Which quantitative method involves testing cause-and-effect relationships without full experimental control?
2. What is the main purpose of a focus group discussion?
3. Fill in the blank: A case study examines a single _____ such as an individual, group, or institution in detail.
4. What is one advantage of quantitative methods?
5. What is one disadvantage of qualitative methods?

1.4 Evaluating And Justifying Research Choices

1.4.1 Strengths and weaknesses of different methods

Every research method has its **strengths** and **weaknesses**, which must be carefully considered before use. Quantitative methods, such as surveys and experiments, are strong in producing measurable, generalisable data and allow for statistical testing. However, they may fail to capture the depth of human experiences. Qualitative methods, such as ethnography and case studies, provide rich insights into social life and context, but they can be time-consuming and less generalisable. Recognising these strengths and weaknesses helps researchers to avoid misinterpretation and ensures that findings are credible.

Fill in the blank: Quantitative methods are strong in producing _____ data and allow for statistical testing.

Caption: Table 1.3 Strengths and weaknesses of research methods

1.4.2 Criteria for selecting appropriate methods

The choice of research method depends on several **criteria**, including the nature of the research problem, the type of data required, available resources, and the intended audience for the findings. For example, if the aim is to measure the prevalence of a social issue, a survey may be most appropriate. If the goal is to explore lived experiences, qualitative methods such as interviews or ethnography may be better suited. Researchers must also consider ethical implications and feasibility when selecting methods.

Fill in the blank: The choice of research method depends on the nature of the _____ problem, type of data, resources, and audience.

Caption: Box 1.2 Criteria for selecting research methods

1.4.3 Justification for combining methods

Sometimes, researchers use a **mixed-methods approach**, which combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. This is justified when a single method cannot adequately address the



research problem. For instance, surveys may provide broad statistical trends, while interviews can add depth and context. Combining methods allows for triangulation, which increases the credibility of findings by cross-verifying results from different sources. However, mixed-methods research requires careful planning to ensure coherence and avoid contradictions.

Fill in the blank: Combining methods allows for _____, which increases the credibility of findings.

Diagram showing integration of quantitative and qualitative methods into a mixed-methods approach. *Caption: Figure 1.4 Mixed-methods approach in social research*

Pilot questions 1.4

1. What is one strength of quantitative methods?
2. What is one weakness of qualitative methods?
3. Fill in the blank: The choice of research method depends on the nature of the _____ problem.
4. Why might a researcher justify using a mixed-methods approach?
5. What does triangulation achieve in social research?

1.5 Ethics And Integrity In Social Research

1.5.1 Importance of integrity in data collection

Integrity in social research refers to the commitment to honesty, accuracy, and transparency throughout the research process. When collecting data, researchers must ensure that information is recorded faithfully without fabrication or distortion. Integrity also requires that participants are treated with respect and that their contributions are represented fairly. Without integrity, findings lose credibility and cannot be considered scientific.

Fill in the blank: Integrity in social research refers to the commitment to _____, accuracy, and transparency.

Diagram showing the pillars of integrity in data collection: honesty, accuracy, transparency, respect. *Caption: Figure 1.5 Pillars of integrity in social research*

1.5.2 Adherence to ethics in research practice

Ethics in social research are principles that guide researchers to act responsibly and protect participants. Key ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, avoiding harm, and respecting cultural values. Ethical adherence ensures that research does not exploit individuals or communities. For example, when conducting interviews, participants must be informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time.

Fill in the blank: One key ethical principle in social research is obtaining _____ consent from participants.



Caption: Box 1.3 Ethical principles in social research

1.5.3 Objectivity in design, data processing, and interpretation

Objectivity means approaching research without personal bias, ensuring that findings are based on evidence rather than opinion. In the design stage, objectivity requires clear and neutral framing of research questions. During data processing, researchers must avoid manipulating results to fit expectations. In interpretation, conclusions should reflect the data rather than preconceived ideas. Objectivity strengthens the credibility of research and ensures that outcomes are accepted as scientific.

Fill in the blank: Objectivity in social research ensures that findings are based on _____ rather than opinion.

Image of a researcher analysing data with charts and graphs, symbolising objectivity. *Caption: Plate 1.4 Objectivity in data analysis*

Pilot questions 1.5

1. What does integrity in social research mean?
2. Fill in the blank: One key ethical principle in social research is obtaining _____ consent.
3. Why is confidentiality important in research practice?
4. What does objectivity require during the interpretation of data?
5. How does integrity contribute to the credibility of research findings?

Series summary

This Series has introduced you to the foundations of social research, emphasising its purpose and relevance in studying human societies. We began by exploring the nature and scope of social research, followed by an examination of descriptive, non-descriptive, and historical strategies. We then considered the different types of research methods, distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative approaches and assessing their advantages and disadvantages. Moving further, we evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of methods, discussed criteria for selecting appropriate approaches, and justified the use of mixed-methods. Finally, we concluded with the importance of integrity, ethics, and objectivity in ensuring credible and scientific outcomes.

By working through these Parts, you should now be able to define the meaning and scope of social research, explain its objectives and role in knowledge generation, distinguish between different strategies and designs, identify and explain both quantitative and qualitative methods, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, assess criteria for method selection, justify combining approaches, and apply principles of integrity, ethics, and objectivity. In doing so, you have achieved the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs 1.1 to 1.10), equipping you with a strong foundation for engaging with more advanced aspects of social research in subsequent Series.



Glossary of terms

- **Case study:** A detailed investigation of a single unit such as an individual, group, or institution, used to gain in-depth understanding of social phenomena.
- **Comparative study:** A method that examines similarities and differences between groups, societies, or time periods to identify patterns and variations.
- **Cross-sectional design:** A research design that studies groups at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of social conditions.
- **Descriptive research:** A method that aims to present an accurate picture of a phenomenon by observing and recording details without manipulating variables.
- **Ethics:** Principles that guide researchers to act responsibly, protect participants, and ensure practices such as informed consent, confidentiality, and avoidance of harm.
- **Ethnography:** The immersive study of people in their natural settings, often involving long-term observation and participation in community life.
- **Focus group discussion:** A guided conversation with a small group of participants to explore collective views and shared experiences.
- **Historical research:** The study of past events, records, and documents to understand social phenomena in their historical context.
- **In-depth interview:** A one-on-one conversation designed to uncover detailed personal perspectives and experiences.
- **Integrity:** Commitment to honesty, accuracy, and transparency in all stages of research, ensuring findings are credible and scientific.
- **Mixed-methods approach:** A strategy that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques to address research problems more comprehensively.
- **Objectivity:** The practice of approaching research without personal bias, ensuring findings are based on evidence rather than opinion.
- **Qualitative research methods:** Approaches that gather non-numerical data to explore meanings, experiences, and social processes.
- **Quantitative research methods:** Approaches that rely on numerical data and statistical analysis to study social phenomena.
- **Quasi-experiment:** A method that tests cause-and-effect relationships without full experimental control, often used when random assignment is not possible.
- **Survey:** A structured method of collecting information from a large group of people using questionnaires or interviews.
- **Triangulation:** The process of cross-verifying results from different methods or sources to increase the credibility of findings.



Concept check questions 1

Objective questions

1. Which term refers to the systematic study of human behaviour and social structures? (Linked to SLO 1.1)
2. Descriptive research aims to present an accurate picture of a phenomenon without _____ variables. (Linked to SLO 1.4)
3. Which quantitative method involves testing cause-and-effect relationships without full experimental control? (Linked to SLO 1.6)
4. One key ethical principle in social research is obtaining _____ consent. (Linked to SLO 1.10)
5. Objectivity in social research ensures that findings are based on _____ rather than opinion. (Linked to SLO 1.10)

Short-answer questions

6. Explain one major objective of social research. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
7. What is the main weakness of historical research? (Linked to SLO 1.5)
8. Identify one advantage of qualitative methods. (Linked to SLO 1.8)
9. State one criterion for selecting an appropriate research method. (Linked to SLO 1.9)
10. Why is integrity important in data collection? (Linked to SLO 1.10)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. (Linked to SLOs 1.6, 1.7, 1.8)
12. Evaluate the justification for combining methods in social research, with examples of when a mixed-methods approach may be most appropriate. (Linked to SLO 1.9)
13. Discuss the role of ethics and objectivity in ensuring credible outcomes in social research. (Linked to SLO 1.10)

Answers to concept check questions [Series 1]

Objective questions

1. Social research.
2. Manipulating.
3. Quasi-experiment.
4. Informed.
5. Evidence.

Short-answer questions



6. One major objective is to describe social phenomena, providing a clear account of behaviours or conditions.
7. Historical research may rely on incomplete or biased records, limiting accuracy.
8. Qualitative methods provide rich insights into meanings and experiences.
9. The nature of the research problem is a key criterion.
10. Integrity ensures that data is recorded honestly and findings remain credible.

Long-answer questions

11. **Basic response:** Quantitative methods rely on numerical data and statistical analysis, offering generalisable results but lacking depth. Qualitative methods focus on meanings and experiences, providing rich insights but being less generalisable. **Value-added response:** Quantitative methods are strong in hypothesis testing and replication, while qualitative methods excel in exploring context and lived experiences. Combining both allows researchers to balance breadth and depth, depending on the research problem.
12. **Basic response:** Combining methods is justified when one approach alone cannot address the research problem. For example, surveys may provide broad trends, while interviews add depth. **Value-added response:** Mixed-methods approaches enhance credibility through triangulation, allowing researchers to cross-verify findings. They are particularly useful in policy research, where both statistical evidence and contextual insights are needed.
13. **Basic response:** Ethics and objectivity ensure that participants are protected and findings are unbiased. Without them, research outcomes lose credibility. **Value-added response:** Ethics safeguard participants through informed consent, confidentiality, and avoidance of harm, while objectivity ensures neutrality in design, analysis, and interpretation. Together, they uphold scientific standards and public trust in social research.

Answers to pilot questions [Series 1]

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Social research
2. To describe
3. To transform observations
4. Archival research
5. Credible and scientific

Pilot questions 1.2

1. Descriptive research
2. Potential bias or incompleteness of records
3. Experimental study



4. Single point
5. They provide detailed observations

Pilot questions 1.3

1. Quasi-experiment
2. To explore collective views
3. Unit
4. Statistical analysis
5. Less generalisable

Pilot questions 1.4

1. Producing measurable data
2. Less generalisable
3. Research
4. To address complex problems more fully
5. Cross-verification of findings

Pilot questions 1.5

1. Commitment to honesty, accuracy, and transparency
2. Informed
3. It protects participants' privacy
4. Evidence-based conclusions
5. It ensures findings are credible

References and attributions [Series 1]

Course content references

- SOC 301: Methods for Social Research (course document provided).
- Concepts and definitions of social research methods, strategies, and ethics were adapted directly from the attached course outline.

• Course code: SOC 301



- **Course title: Methods for Social Research**
- **Course credit load: 4**

SERIES 2: Research Designs: Descriptive, Experimental, and Historical Approaches

Series outline

- **Part 2.1 Descriptive research design**
 - 2.1.1 Meaning and features of descriptive studies
 - 2.1.2 Strengths and weaknesses of descriptive design
 - 2.1.3 Contexts where descriptive design is most useful
- **Part 2.2 Experimental research design**
 - 2.2.1 Meaning and features of experimental studies
 - 2.2.2 Strengths and weaknesses of experimental design
 - 2.2.3 Applications of experimental design in social research
- **Part 2.3 Cross-sectional design and survey method**
 - 2.3.1 Meaning and features of cross-sectional studies
 - 2.3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of cross-sectional design
 - 2.3.3 Role of surveys in cross-sectional research
- **Part 2.4 Historical research design**
 - 2.4.1 Meaning and features of historical research
 - 2.4.2 Strengths and weaknesses of historical design
 - 2.4.3 Selection of historical design based on research problem
- **Part 2.5 Selecting appropriate designs**
 - 2.5.1 Criteria for choosing between descriptive, experimental, cross-sectional, and historical designs
 - 2.5.2 Justification for design choice in different contexts

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the foundations of social research, focusing on its meaning, scope, methods, and ethical considerations. Building on that knowledge, this Series turns to the specific designs that guide how research is structured and carried out. Research designs are crucial because they provide the framework that determines how data is collected, analysed, and interpreted, ensuring that findings are both credible and relevant.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the ability to define, explain, and evaluate the main research designs used in social research, and to apply criteria for selecting the most appropriate design for different research problems.



We shall commence this Series by examining descriptive research design, considering its meaning, features, and contexts of use. Next, we will explore experimental research design, highlighting its strengths, weaknesses, and applications. Subsequently, we will study cross-sectional design and the survey method, focusing on their role in providing snapshots of social conditions. Following that, we will move on to historical research design, analysing its features and the challenges of working with past records. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing how to select appropriate designs, considering criteria and justifications for choosing between descriptive, experimental, cross-sectional, and historical approaches.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 2.1** define the meaning and features of descriptive research design,
- **SLO 2.2** analyse the strengths and weaknesses of descriptive design,
- **SLO 2.3** explain the meaning and features of experimental research design,
- **SLO 2.4** evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of experimental design,
- **SLO 2.5** describe the meaning and features of cross-sectional design and the survey method,
- **SLO 2.6** assess the strengths and weaknesses of cross-sectional design,
- **SLO 2.7** explain the role of surveys in cross-sectional research,
- **SLO 2.8** define the meaning and features of historical research design,
- **SLO 2.9** evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of historical research design,
- **SLO 2.10** apply criteria for selecting appropriate research designs based on the research problem, and
- **SLO 2.11** justify the choice of design in different social research contexts.

2.1 Descriptive Research Design

2.1.1 Meaning and features of descriptive studies

Descriptive research design refers to a systematic approach that aims to present an accurate picture of a phenomenon by observing and recording details without manipulating variables. Its main feature is that it focuses on describing characteristics such as behaviours, attitudes, or social conditions. Unlike experimental designs, descriptive studies do not test cause-and-effect relationships but instead provide a clear account of what exists. This makes them particularly useful for exploring new areas where little prior knowledge is available.

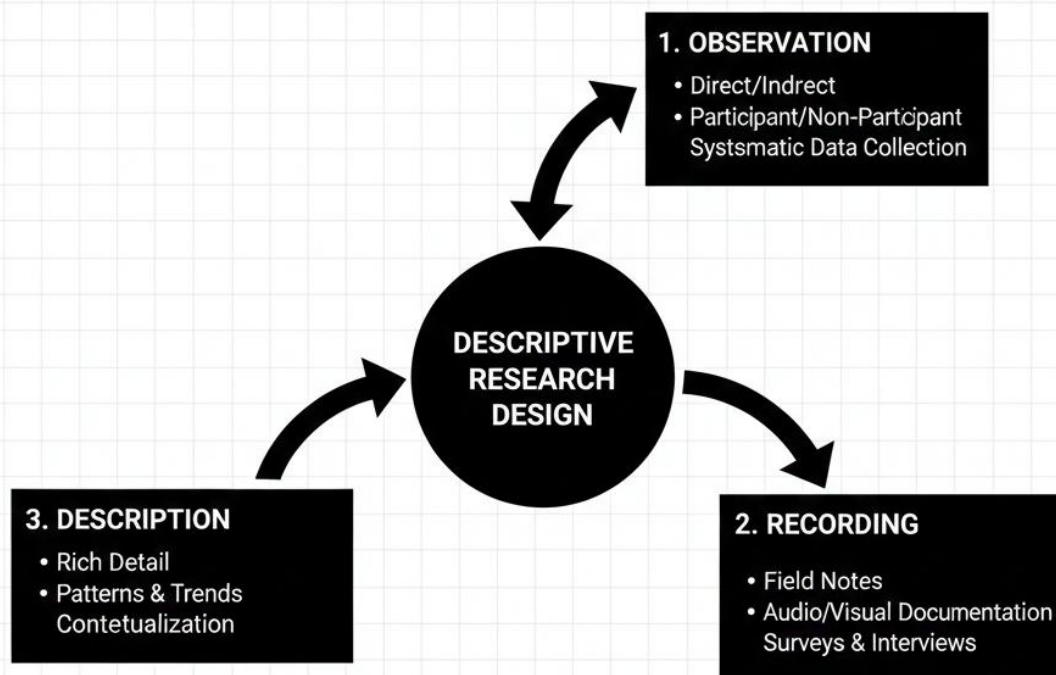
Fill in the blank: Descriptive research design aims to present an accurate picture of a phenomenon without _____ variables.



Box 1.283: Descriptive Research Design

Exploring Features & Process

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Overall Impact: This diagram illustrates the core features of descriptive design, emphasizing its focus on systematic observation and recording of social phenomena without manipulation. It provides foundational understanding of characteristics and processes in real-world settings, serving as the basis for further exploration or hypothesis generation.

OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:54:46 AM WAT

Diagram showing descriptive research design as observation and recording of social phenomena.

Caption: Figure 2.1 Features of descriptive research design

2.1.2 Strengths and weaknesses of descriptive design

The **strengths** of descriptive design include its ability to provide detailed observations, generate baseline information, and highlight patterns in social behaviour. It is relatively simple to conduct and often requires fewer resources compared to experimental designs. However, its **weaknesses** lie in its inability to establish causality, as it only describes phenomena without explaining why they occur. Additionally, descriptive studies may be limited by researcher bias or by the representativeness of the sample.



Fill in the blank: One weakness of descriptive design is that it cannot establish _____ relationships.

OER

Box 1.284: Descriptive Research Designs & Weaknesses: Strengths

Comparative Methodological Approaches

	Strengths (–)	Weaknesses (–)
Research Aspect	• Rich Detail & • Bias Prone • Limited Patterns	• Artificial Settings • Ethical Concerns • Generalizability
1. Descriptive Research	• No Causation	• No Causation
• Identifies Patterns • Foundation for Further Research	• Observer Bias • Generalizability Concerns	• No Causation • Cohort Effects • Flexibility

Overall Impact: This table summarizes the trade-off of descriptive research. While descriptive studies and studies of social phenomena, methodological strengths and the influence of context on the choice for understanding the research question in research question studies in the field desired insights.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:55:32 AM WAT

Caption: Table 2.1 Strengths and weaknesses of descriptive research design

2.1.3 Contexts where descriptive design is most useful

Descriptive design is most useful in contexts where the aim is to provide a snapshot of social conditions. For example, surveys describing literacy rates, studies documenting cultural practices, or reports on public health behaviours often rely on descriptive approaches. It is also valuable in exploratory research, where the goal is to identify issues or trends that may later be studied using more complex designs.



Fill in the blank: Descriptive design is most useful when the aim is to provide a _____ of social conditions.



Box 1.287: Contexts for Descriptive Research Design

When to Use This Approach

1. Exploring New Areas: - Under-researched Topics - Voluntarily - Pilot Studies for Broader Research - Documentation Emerging Trends - Needs Assessments	2. Detailing Social Phenomena: - Market Research (Consumer Behavior) - Public Health Studies (Disease Prevalence) - Educational Research (Curriculum Impact) - Anthropological Studies (Cultural Practices)
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Overall Impact:

This box summarizes outline key situations where descriptive research excels. By focusing on descriptive observations and documentation, it provides foundational insights into social phenomena, guiding further exploration, policy development, and understanding of positive-world contexts.

OER Text Box
Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:56:22 AM WAT

Caption: Box 2.1 Contexts for applying descriptive research design

Pilot questions 2.1

1. What does descriptive research design aim to achieve?
2. Fill in the blank: One weakness of descriptive design is that it cannot establish _____ relationships.
3. What is one strength of descriptive research design?
4. In which contexts is descriptive design most useful?



5. Fill in the blank: Descriptive design is most useful when the aim is to provide a _____ of social conditions.

2.2 Experimental Research Design

2.2.1 Meaning and features of experimental studies

Experimental research design refers to a structured approach in which variables are deliberately manipulated to test cause-and-effect relationships. Its main feature is the use of control and experimental groups, allowing researchers to isolate the impact of one variable while keeping others constant. This design is often considered the most rigorous because it provides strong evidence of causality. In social research, experiments may be conducted in controlled environments such as laboratories or in natural settings where conditions can be managed.

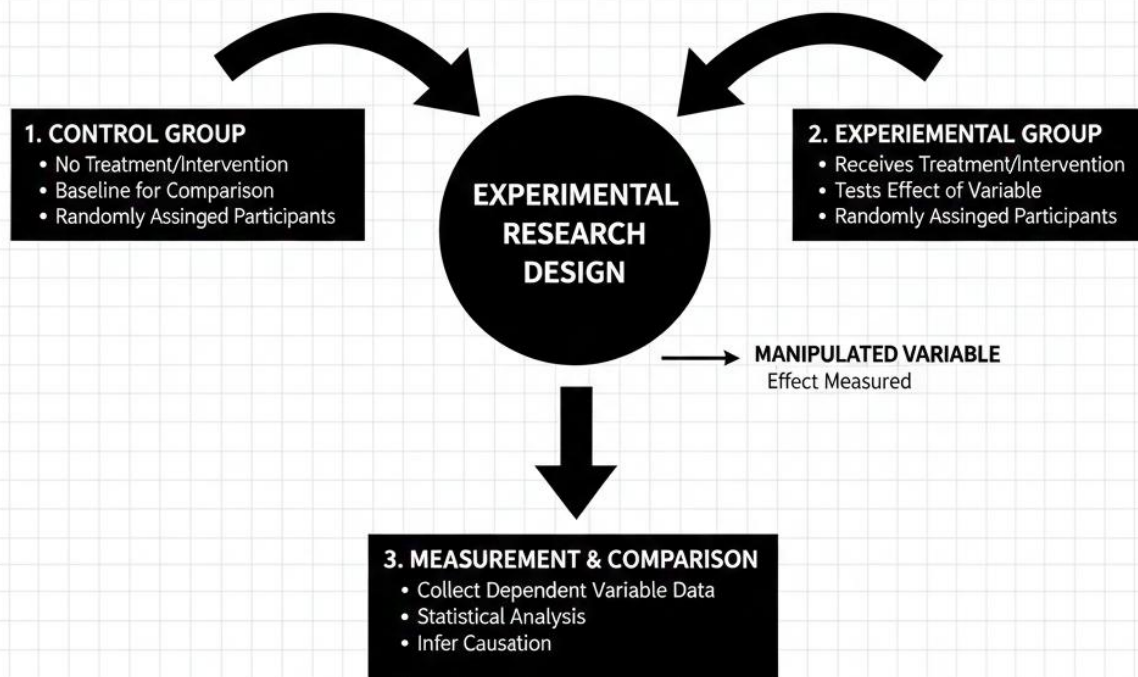
Fill in the blank: Experimental research design deliberately manipulates _____ to test cause-and-effect relationships.



Box 1.288: Experimental Research Design

Understanding Causal Relationships

OER



Overall Impact

This diagram illustrates the core components of an experimental design, emphasizing the use of a control and experimental group to manipulate a variable to determine causal relationships. This rigorous approach for establishing cause-and-effect in research, providing reliable insights for policy and practice.

OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:57:12 AM WAT

Diagram showing experimental design with control group, experimental group, and manipulated variable. *Caption: Figure 2.2 Features of experimental research design*

2.2.2 Strengths and weaknesses of experimental design

The **strengths** of experimental design include its ability to establish causality, provide replicable results, and allow precise control over variables. It is particularly effective for testing hypotheses and developing theories. However, its **weaknesses** lie in its artificiality, as controlled conditions may not reflect real-world complexity. Experiments can also be resource-intensive and may raise ethical concerns, especially when human subjects are involved.

Fill in the blank: One strength of experimental design is its ability to establish _____ relationships.



Box 1.284: Descriptive Research Design

Exploring Features & Process

OER

Box 1.289: Experimental Design: Strengths & Weaknesses: Strengths Methodological Approaches

Comparative Methodological Approaches

	Strengths (+)	Weaknesses (–)
1. Experimental Research Design	• Rich Detail & • Establish Cause-Effect • Internal Validity	• Artificial Settings • Ethical Concerns • Generalizability
1. Descriptive Research	• No Causation	• Replicability
• Identifies Patterns • Foundation for Further Research	• Observer Bias • Generalizability Concerns	• Ethical Concerns • Limited Generalizability • Flexibility

Overall Impact: This table summarizes the trade-off of trade-off of common researches. While descriptive studies and studies into social phenomena, methodological approaches and the influence of internal validity to internal validity the choice for understanding the research question in research question questions in the study desired insights.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:57:32 AM WAT

Caption: Table 2.2 Strengths and weaknesses of experimental research design

2.2.3 Applications of experimental design in social research

Experimental design is applied in contexts where researchers aim to test the effectiveness of interventions or programmes. For example, evaluating the impact of a new teaching method on student performance, testing the influence of media messages on public attitudes, or assessing the outcomes of community health initiatives. These applications demonstrate how experiments can provide evidence to guide policy and practice.

Fill in the blank: Experimental design is often applied to test the effectiveness of _____ or programmes.



Box 1.290: Applications of Experimental Research Design

When to Use This Approach

1. Cause-and-Effect Testing:

- Medical Research (Drug Trials)
- Educational Interventions (Teaching Methods)
- Marketing Campaign Methods
- Marketing Campaigns (Ad Effectiveness)
- Product Development (User Experience)

2. Theory & Hypotheses Testing:

- Psychology Experiments
- Behavioral Science
- Social Policy Evaluation (Program Impact)
- Agricultural Science (Crop Yield)
- Engineering & Tech (System Performance)

Overall Impact:

This box enumerates key situations where experimental research excels. By focusing on manipulation and control, it provides strong evidence for causal relationships, enabling reliable insights for practical and applied research across diverse fields.

OER Text Box

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:58:46 AM WAT

Caption: Box 2.2 Applications of experimental research design

Pilot questions 2.2

1. What does experimental research design aim to achieve?
2. Fill in the blank: One strength of experimental design is its ability to establish _____ relationships.
3. What is one weakness of experimental design?
4. In which contexts is experimental design most commonly applied?
5. Fill in the blank: Experimental design is often applied to test the effectiveness of _____ or programmes.



2.3 Cross-Sectional Design And Survey Method

2.3.1 Meaning and features of cross-sectional studies

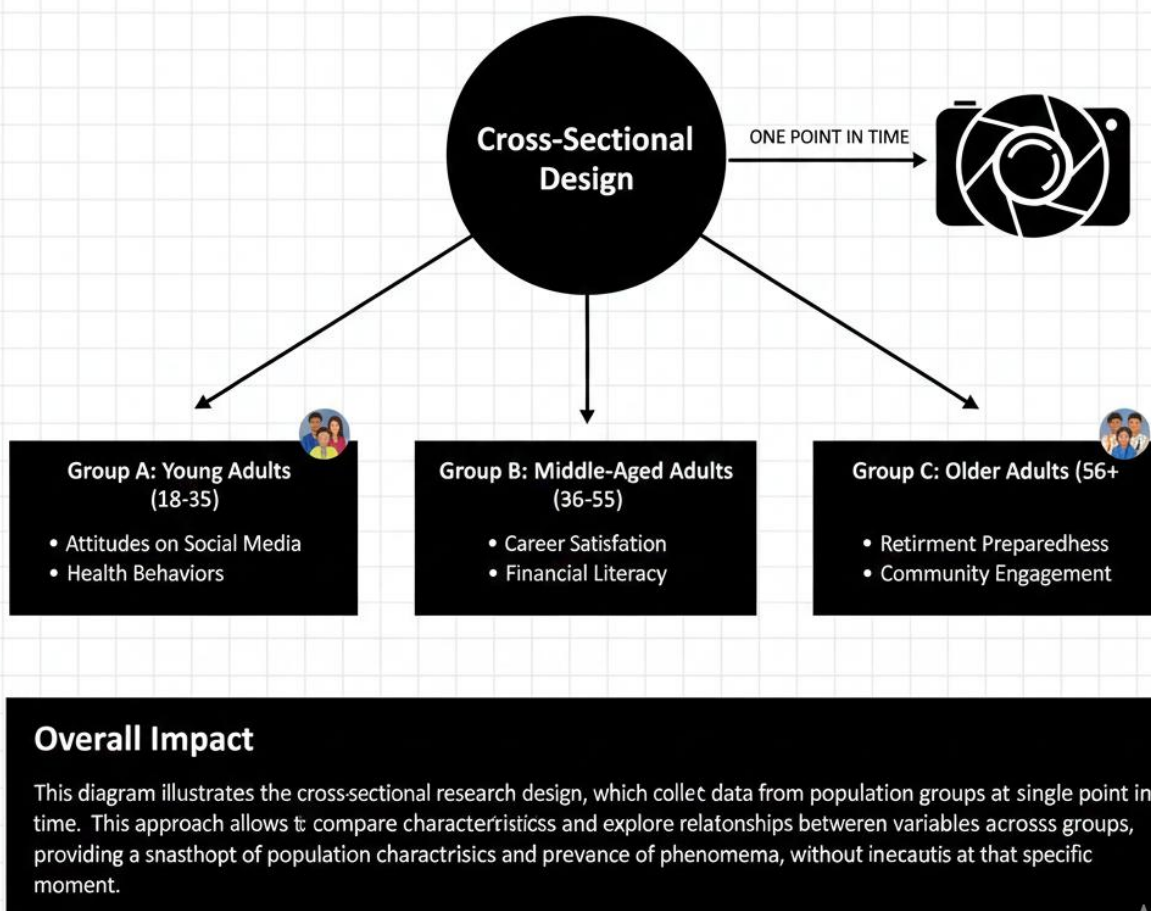
Cross-sectional design refers to a research approach that studies groups at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of social conditions. Its main feature is that it collects data simultaneously from different individuals or groups, allowing researchers to compare variations across categories such as age, gender, or occupation. Unlike longitudinal studies, cross-sectional designs do not track changes over time but are efficient for identifying patterns and associations.

Fill in the blank: Cross-sectional design provides a _____ of social conditions at a single point in time.



Box 1.291: Cross-Sectional Research Design

A Snapshot in Time



OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:59:34 AM WAT

Diagram showing cross-sectional design as a snapshot of different groups at one point in time.

Caption: Figure 2.3 Features of cross-sectional design

2.3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of cross-sectional design

The **strengths** of cross-sectional design include its efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and ability to highlight differences between groups. It is particularly useful for surveys and large-scale studies where time and resources are limited. However, its **weaknesses** lie in its inability to establish causality or track changes over time. Since data is collected at one point, it cannot reveal how variables evolve or interact across different periods.

Fill in the blank: One weakness of cross-sectional design is that it cannot track _____ over time.



Box 1.282: Descriptive Research Design

Exploring Features & Process

OER

Box 1.292: Cross-Sectional Design: Strengths & Weaknesses: Strengths Methodological Calyn

Comparative Methodological Approaches

	Strengths (+)	Weaknesses (-)
1. Experimental Research Design	• Cost-Effective & Fast • Studies Prevalence • Generates Hypotheses	• No Causation • Short Effects • Snapshot No Follow-up
1. Descriptive Research	• No Causation	• Snapshot Only/No Follow-up
• Identifies Patterns • Foundation for Further Design	• Observer Bias • Generalizability Concerns	• Ethical Concerns • Limited Generalizability • Flexibility

Overall Impact: This table summarizes the trade-off of trade-off of common researches. While descriptive studies and studies into social phenomena, methodological strengths and the influence of the researcher to influence the choice for understanding the research question in research question studies in the field desired insights.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 12:00:14 PM WAT

Caption: Table 2.3 Strengths and weaknesses of cross-sectional design

2.3.3 Role of surveys in cross-sectional research

A **survey** is a structured method of collecting information from a large group of people using questionnaires or interviews. In cross-sectional research, surveys play a central role by gathering data from diverse groups at the same time. They allow researchers to measure prevalence, attitudes, and behaviours across populations. Surveys are versatile, as they can be conducted face-to-face, online, or by telephone, making them a practical tool for social research.

Fill in the blank: A survey is a structured method of collecting information from a large group of people using _____ or interviews.



Box 1.293: Role of Surveys in Cross-Sectional Research

Data Collection at a Single Point in Time

1. Primary Data Collection:

- Standardized Questionnaires
- Attitudes & Opinions
- Behaviors & Characteristics
- Demographic Information

2. Key Contributions

- Measure Prevalence
- Explore Relationships
- Identify Trends
- Cost-Effective & Efficient

Overall Impact: This box summarizes how surveys are a fundamental tool in cross-sectional research, enabling researchers to efficiently gather data from large, diverse samples to describe populations and explore associations between variables at a specific point in time, providing momenton valuable insights for various fields

OER Text Box Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 12:01:02 PM WAT

Caption: Box 2.3 Role of surveys in cross-sectional research

Pilot questions 2.3

1. What does cross-sectional design aim to achieve?
2. Fill in the blank: One weakness of cross-sectional design is that it cannot track _____ over time.
3. What is one strength of cross-sectional design?
4. What role do surveys play in cross-sectional research?
5. Fill in the blank: A survey is a structured method of collecting information from a large group of people using _____ or interviews.



2.4 Historical Research Design

2.4.1 Meaning and features of historical research

Historical research design refers to the systematic study of past events, records, and documents to understand social phenomena in their historical context. Its main feature is reliance on sources such as archives, official records, newspapers, and oral histories. By examining these sources, researchers can trace developments over time and explain how past events shape present realities. Historical research is particularly valuable in identifying long-term trends and providing insights into the evolution of social institutions.

Fill in the blank: Historical research design relies on sources such as archives, official records, newspapers, and _____ histories.





Historical Research: Uncovering the Past through Archives

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 12:01:43 PM WAT

Image of a researcher examining archival documents in a library. *Caption: Plate 2.1 Archival research as a historical design*

2.4.2 Strengths and weaknesses of historical design

The **strengths** of historical design include its ability to provide context, trace developments over time, and highlight the influence of past events on present conditions. It can also uncover valuable insights from records that might otherwise be overlooked. However, its **weaknesses** lie in the potential bias or incompleteness of historical records, difficulties in verifying accuracy, and the challenge of interpreting events without imposing modern perspectives.

Fill in the blank: One weakness of historical design is the potential _____ or incompleteness of records.



Box 1.284: Descriptive Research Design

Exploring Features & Process

OER

Box 1.294: Historical Research Design: Strengths & Weaknesses

Comparative Methodological Approaches

	Strengths (+)	Weaknesses (-)
1. Experimental Research Design	• Cost-Effective & Fast • Studies Prevalence • Generates Past Data	• Source Bias/Reliability • Snapshot No Follow-up • Generalization No Difficult
2. Descriptive Research	• No Causation	• Causation is Difficult
• Identifies Patterns • Foundation for Further Design	• Observer Bias • Generalizability Concerns	• Limiting Concerns • Short Effects Flexibility • Flexibility

Overall Impact: This table summarizes the trade-off using trade-off of common researches. While it contextualizes in depth the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches, it also highlights the challenges that still need to be addressed.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 12:03:04 PM WAT

Caption: Table 2.4 Strengths and weaknesses of historical research design

2.4.3 Selection of historical design based on research problem

The choice to use historical design depends on the nature of the research problem. It is most appropriate when the aim is to understand how past events influence current social issues or when long-term trends need to be analysed. For example, studies on the history of education policies, the evolution of cultural practices, or the development of political institutions often rely on historical design. Researchers must carefully select sources, evaluate their reliability, and justify why historical design is the most suitable approach.

Fill in the blank: Historical design is most appropriate when the aim is to understand how _____ events influence current social issues.



Box 1.295: Contexts for Historical Research Design

When to Use This Approach

1. Exploring the Past:

- Understanding Origins & Evolution
- Tracking Social & Cultural Change
- Analyzing Past Policies/Events
- Biographies & Genealogies
- Institutional Histories

2. Explaining Present Phoomamna:

- Informing Current Debates
- Learning from Past Mistakes
- Identifying Long-Term Trends
- Validating Theories Historically
- Comparative Historical Analysis

Overall Impact: This box outlines key situations where historical research design is available. By examining primary and sources, researchers can reconstruct past causality over time, and gain and gain insights the-long socieals roving depth and pepeith and perspective to contempooary issues.

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OER Text Box

Caption: Box 2.4 Contexts for applying historical research design

Pilot questions 2.4

1. What does historical research design aim to achieve?
2. Fill in the blank: One weakness of historical design is the potential _____ or incompleteness of records.
3. What is one strength of historical research design?
4. In which contexts is historical design most appropriate?
5. Fill in the blank: Historical design is most appropriate when the aim is to understand how _____ events influence current social issues.



2.5 Selecting Appropriate Designs

2.5.1 Criteria for choosing between descriptive, experimental, cross-sectional, and historical designs

The choice of a research design depends on several **criteria**, including the nature of the research problem, the type of data required, available resources, and the intended audience for the findings. For example, if the aim is to provide a snapshot of social conditions, a descriptive or cross-sectional design may be most suitable. If the goal is to establish cause-and-effect relationships, experimental design is appropriate. Historical design, on the other hand, is best when the research problem requires understanding past events and their influence on present realities. Ethical considerations and feasibility also play a crucial role in guiding the choice of design.

Fill in the blank: The choice of a research design depends on the nature of the _____ problem, type of data, resources, and audience.



Box 1.296: Criteria Selecting Research Designs

Guiding Methodological Choices

OER

1. Key Research Factors:

- Research Question & Objectives
- Nature of Phenomena/Trends)
- Target Population & Sample Size
- Time & Budget Constraints

2. Practical & Ethical Factors:

- Researcher Skills & Expertise
- Data Accessibility & Feasibility
- Ethical Considerations (Harm)
- Available Resources/Tools

Overall Impact: This box enumerates essential criteria for selecting appropriate research designs. By considering these factors, researchers can align their methodology with your study goals, ensure feasibility, address ethical concerns, and enhance the validity and reliability of their findings.

OER Text Box Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 12:04:02 PM WAT

Caption: Box 2.5 Criteria for selecting research designs

2.5.2 Justification for design choice in different contexts

Researchers must be able to **justify** their choice of design by explaining why it is the most suitable for the research problem. For instance, a descriptive design may be justified when exploring literacy rates across communities, while an experimental design may be justified when testing the impact of a new teaching method. Cross-sectional design is often justified when comparing differences between groups at one point in time, and historical design when analysing long-term trends. Justification ensures that the design aligns with the objectives of the study and enhances the credibility of findings.

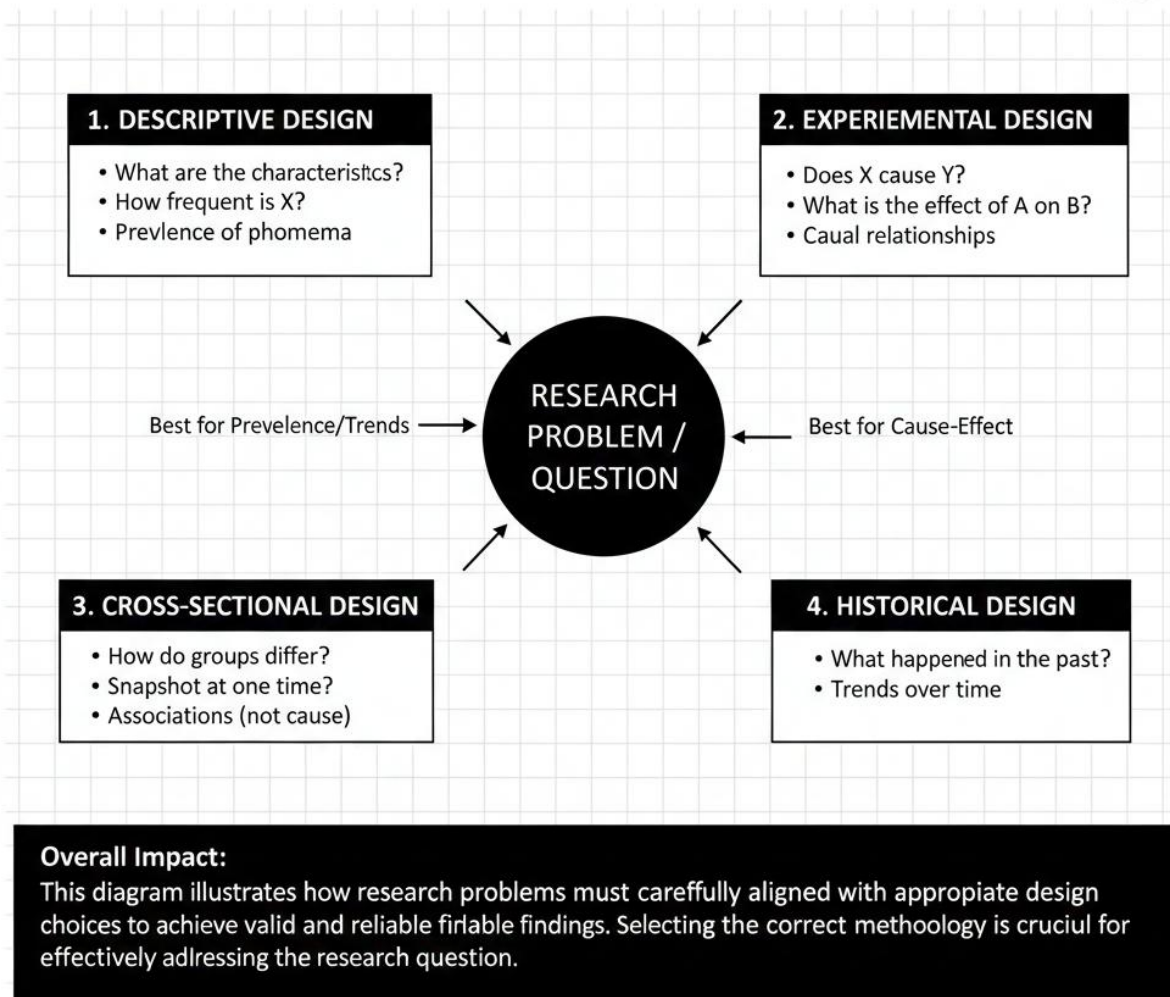


Fill in the blank: Researchers must justify their choice of design by explaining why it is the most _____ for the research problem.

Box 1.297: Aligning Research Problems with Designs

Choosing the Appropriate Methodological Approach

OER



OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 12:05:00 PM WAT

Diagram showing alignment of research problems with appropriate designs (descriptive, experimental, cross-sectional, historical). *Caption: Figure 2.5 Aligning research problems with design choices*

Pilot questions 2.5

1. What factors influence the choice of a research design?
2. Fill in the blank: The choice of a research design depends on the nature of the _____ problem.



3. Why is justification important when selecting a research design?
4. Give one example of a context where descriptive design may be justified.
5. Fill in the blank: Researchers must justify their choice of design by explaining why it is the most _____ for the research problem.

Series summary

This Series has focused on the different research designs that guide how social research is structured and carried out. We began with descriptive research design, examining its meaning, features, and contexts of use. We then moved on to experimental design, highlighting its strengths, weaknesses, and applications in testing cause-and-effect relationships. Following that, we explored cross-sectional design and the survey method, considering their role in providing snapshots of social conditions. We continued with historical research design, analysing its reliance on past records and its strengths and limitations. Finally, we concluded by discussing the criteria for selecting appropriate designs and the importance of justifying choices in different contexts.

By working through these Parts, you should now be able to define and analyse descriptive, experimental, cross-sectional, and historical designs, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, explain the role of surveys, apply criteria for selecting designs, and justify design choices in varied contexts. In doing so, you have achieved the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs 2.1 to 2.11), equipping you with the ability to make informed decisions about research design and to apply them effectively in social research practice.

Glossary of terms

- **Control group:** A group in an experiment that does not receive the treatment or intervention, used as a baseline for comparison.
- **Cross-sectional design:** A research approach that studies groups at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of social conditions.
- **Descriptive research design:** A systematic approach that aims to present an accurate picture of a phenomenon by observing and recording details without manipulating variables.
- **Experimental research design:** A structured approach in which variables are deliberately manipulated to test cause-and-effect relationships, often involving control and experimental groups.
- **Historical research design:** The systematic study of past events, records, and documents to understand social phenomena in their historical context.
- **Justification of design choice:** The explanation provided by a researcher to show why a particular design is most suitable for addressing the research problem.



- **Research problem:** The specific issue, question, or area of interest that guides the choice of research design and methods.
- **Snapshot:** A term used to describe the single-point view of social conditions provided by cross-sectional studies.
- **Survey:** A structured method of collecting information from a large group of people using questionnaires or interviews, often central to cross-sectional research.
- **Variable manipulation:** The deliberate alteration of one or more factors in experimental research to test their effect on outcomes.

Concept check questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

1. Descriptive research design aims to present an accurate picture of a phenomenon without _____ variables. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Which design deliberately manipulates variables to test cause-and-effect relationships? (Linked to SLO 2.3)
3. Cross-sectional design provides a _____ of social conditions at a single point in time. (Linked to SLO 2.5)
4. One weakness of historical design is the potential _____ or incompleteness of records. (Linked to SLO 2.9)
5. The choice of a research design depends on the nature of the _____ problem. (Linked to SLO 2.10)

Short-answer questions

6. State one strength of descriptive research design. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
7. Explain one weakness of experimental research design. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
8. What role do surveys play in cross-sectional research? (Linked to SLO 2.7)
9. Give one example of a context where historical design may be justified. (Linked to SLO 2.8)
10. Why is justification important when selecting a research design? (Linked to SLO 2.11)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of descriptive research design, providing examples of when it may be most useful. (Linked to SLOs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3)
12. Evaluate the applications of experimental research design in social research, highlighting both its advantages and limitations. (Linked to SLOs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6)
13. Discuss the role of surveys in cross-sectional research, explaining how they contribute to understanding social conditions. (Linked to SLOs 2.5, 2.6, 2.7)



14. Assess the contexts in which historical research design is most appropriate, and explain how researchers can address its weaknesses. (Linked to SLOs 2.8, 2.9)

15. Apply criteria for selecting appropriate designs and justify choices in different social research contexts. (Linked to SLOs 2.10, 2.11)

Answers to concept check questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

1. Manipulating.
2. Experimental research design.
3. Snapshot.
4. Bias.
5. Research.

Short-answer questions

6. It provides detailed observations of social phenomena.
7. It may lack real-world applicability due to artificial conditions.
8. Surveys collect structured data from large groups, allowing comparisons across categories.
9. Studying the evolution of cultural practices.
10. Justification ensures the design aligns with the research problem and enhances credibility.

Long-answer questions

11. **Basic response:** Descriptive design provides detailed observations and baseline information but cannot establish causality. It is most useful for surveys or exploratory studies.

Value-added response: Descriptive design is valuable in documenting social patterns, such as literacy rates or health behaviours. However, researchers must be cautious of bias and limited representativeness. It is best applied when the aim is to generate initial insights for further research.

12. **Basic response:** Experimental design establishes causality and provides replicable results but may lack real-world applicability. **Value-added response:** Experimental design is powerful for testing interventions, such as teaching methods or health programmes. Yet, ethical concerns and resource demands must be considered. Balancing control with ecological validity is key to its effective use.

13. **Basic response:** Surveys in cross-sectional research provide structured data that capture attitudes and behaviours at one point in time. **Value-added response:** Surveys allow researchers to measure prevalence, compare groups, and provide baseline data for policy decisions. Their versatility in administration makes them central to cross-sectional studies, though they cannot track changes over time.



14. **Basic response:** Historical design is appropriate when analysing past events to understand current issues, such as education policy history. **Value-added response:** Researchers can address weaknesses by triangulating sources, critically evaluating reliability, and avoiding modern bias in interpretation. This strengthens the credibility of historical findings.

15. **Basic response:** Criteria such as the research problem, type of data, resources, and ethical considerations guide design selection. **Value-added response:** For example, descriptive design may be chosen for documenting social conditions, experimental design for testing interventions, cross-sectional design for comparing groups, and historical design for analysing long-term trends. Justification ensures alignment with objectives and enhances trust in findings.

Answers to pilot questions [Series 2]

Pilot questions 2.1

1. To present an accurate picture of a phenomenon.
2. Causal.
3. Provides detailed observations.
4. In contexts where a snapshot of social conditions is needed.
5. Snapshot.

Pilot questions 2.2

1. To test cause-and-effect relationships.
2. Causal.
3. May lack real-world applicability.
4. In contexts such as evaluating teaching methods or health initiatives.
5. Interventions.

Pilot questions 2.3

1. To provide a snapshot of social conditions at a single point in time.
2. Changes.
3. Efficient and cost-effective.
4. Surveys collect structured data and highlight group differences.
5. Questionnaires.

Pilot questions 2.4

1. To understand social phenomena in their historical context.
2. Bias.



3. Provides historical context and traces developments over time.
4. Studies on education policy history or cultural evolution.
5. Past.

Pilot questions 2.5

1. Nature of the research problem, type of data, resources, audience, and ethics.
2. Research.
3. It ensures alignment with objectives and credibility of findings.
4. Documenting literacy rates across communities.
5. Suitable.

References and attributions [Series 2]

Course content references

- SOC 301: Methods for Social Research (course document provided).
- Concepts and definitions of descriptive, experimental, cross-sectional, and historical research designs were adapted directly from the course outline.

- **Course code: SOC 301**
- **Course title: Methods for Social Research**
- **Course credit load: 4**

SERIES 3: Quantitative and Qualitative Strategies in Social Inquiry

Series outline

- **Part 3.1 Quantitative strategies in social inquiry**
 - 3.1.1 Meaning and features of quantitative strategies
 - 3.1.2 Strengths and weaknesses of quantitative strategies
 - 3.1.3 Applications of quantitative strategies in social research



- **Part 3.2 Qualitative strategies in social inquiry**
 - 3.2.1 Meaning and features of qualitative strategies
 - 3.2.2 Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative strategies
 - 3.2.3 Applications of qualitative strategies in social research
- **Part 3.3 Comparative analysis of quantitative and qualitative strategies**
 - 3.3.1 Key differences between quantitative and qualitative strategies
 - 3.3.2 Situations where each strategy is most appropriate
 - 3.3.3 Limitations of relying solely on one strategy
- **Part 3.4 Integrating quantitative and qualitative strategies (mixed-methods approach)**
 - 3.4.1 Meaning and rationale for mixed-methods
 - 3.4.2 Strengths and weaknesses of mixed-methods
 - 3.4.3 Examples of mixed-methods applications in social research

Introduction

In the last Series, we examined the different research designs, including descriptive, experimental, cross-sectional, and historical approaches, and considered how to select the most appropriate design for a given research problem. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the strategies that underpin social inquiry. These strategies are essential because they determine how data is gathered, interpreted, and presented, shaping the credibility and depth of research outcomes.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the ability to define, explain, and evaluate both quantitative and qualitative strategies, compare their strengths and weaknesses, and apply them appropriately in social research, including through integration in mixed-methods approaches.

We shall commence this Series by exploring quantitative strategies, focusing on their meaning, features, and applications. Next, we will move on to qualitative strategies, examining their distinctive features and contexts of use. Following that, we will undertake a comparative analysis of quantitative and qualitative strategies, highlighting their differences and limitations. Finally, we will wrap up by considering how both strategies can be integrated through mixed-methods approaches, discussing their rationale, strengths, and examples of application in social research.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 3.1** define the meaning and features of quantitative strategies in social inquiry,
- **SLO 3.2** evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative strategies,
- **SLO 3.3** apply quantitative strategies to examples of social research,
- **SLO 3.4** define the meaning and features of qualitative strategies in social inquiry,
- **SLO 3.5** analyse the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative strategies,



- **SLO 3.6** illustrate applications of qualitative strategies in social research,
- **SLO 3.7** compare the key differences between quantitative and qualitative strategies,
- **SLO 3.8** assess situations where each strategy is most appropriate,
- **SLO 3.9** explain the limitations of relying solely on one strategy,
- **SLO 3.10** define the meaning and rationale for mixed-methods approaches,
- **SLO 3.11** evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of mixed-methods approaches, and
- **SLO 3.12** demonstrate examples of mixed-methods applications in social research.

3.1 Quantitative Strategies in Social Inquiry

3.1.1 Meaning and features of quantitative strategies

Quantitative strategies refer to research approaches that rely on numerical data and statistical techniques to study social phenomena. Their main feature is the use of measurable variables, often expressed in numbers, which can be analysed to identify patterns, relationships, or trends. Quantitative strategies typically employ structured instruments such as questionnaires, surveys, or experiments, and they emphasise objectivity, precision, and replicability.

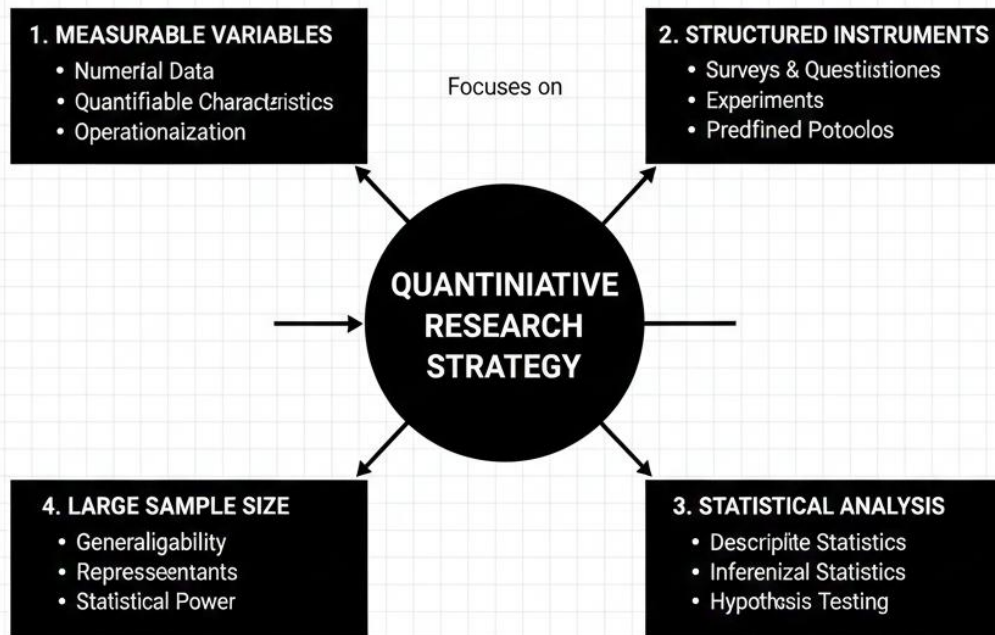
Fill in the blank: Quantitative strategies rely on _____ data and statistical techniques to study social phenomena.



Box 1.298: Quantitative Research Strategy

Exploring Data-Driven Approaches

OER



Overall Impact:

This diagram outlines the core components of quantitative research, emphasizing the use of numerical data, structural methods to test theories and generate findings from a sample to a population, providing objective insights into social phenomena.

OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:03:39 PM WAT

Diagram showing quantitative strategies with measurable variables, structured instruments, and statistical analysis. *Caption: Figure 3.1 Features of quantitative strategies*

3.1.2 Strengths and weaknesses of quantitative strategies

The **strengths** of quantitative strategies include their ability to produce generalisable results, provide precise measurements, and allow statistical testing of hypotheses. They are particularly effective for large-scale studies where patterns across populations need to be identified.

However, their **weaknesses** lie in their limited ability to capture the depth of human experiences, as they often reduce complex social realities to numbers. Quantitative strategies may also overlook context and meaning, focusing instead on measurable outcomes.

Fill in the blank: One strength of quantitative strategies is their ability to produce _____ results.



Box 1.299: Quantitative Research Strengths & Weaknesses

OER

Comparative Methodological Approaches

1. Quantitative Research Strategy	Weaknesses (–)
• Rich Detail & • Establishes Cause-Effect • Internal Validity • Cost-Effective & Fast • Studies Prevalence • Generates Hypotheses	• Artificial Settings • Ethical Concerns • Generalizability • No Causation • Snapshot No Follow-up • Snapshot Only/No Follow-up
1. Descriptive Research	Replicability
• Identifies Patterns • Foundation for Further Design • Generalizability Concerns	• Observer Bias • Ethical Concerns • Limited Generalizability Flexibility

Overall Impact: This table summarizes the trade-off of common researches. While descriptive studies and snapshot studies provide prevalence rates and the influence of the choice for understanding the research question, the choice for understanding the research question is in the desired insights.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:05:14 PM WAT

Caption: Table 3.1 Strengths and weaknesses of quantitative strategies

3.1.3 Applications of quantitative strategies in social research

Quantitative strategies are widely applied in social research where the aim is to measure prevalence, test relationships, or evaluate interventions. For example, surveys measuring literacy rates, experiments testing the impact of teaching methods, or statistical analyses of health behaviours all rely on quantitative approaches. These applications demonstrate how numerical data can provide evidence for policy-making, programme evaluation, and theory development.

Fill in the blank: Quantitative strategies are widely applied in social research where the aim is to measure _____ or test relationships.



Box 1.300: Applications of Quantitative Strategies in Social Research

OER

When to Use This Approach

1. Measuring & Testing:

- Surveys & Polls (Public Opinion)
- Program Evaluation (Effectiveness)
- Economic Modeling (Trends & Forecasts)
- Health Research (Disease Prevention)
- Educational Research (Student Outcomes)

2. Exploring Relationships:

- Correlational Studies (Variable Links)
- Causal Research (Cause-and-Effect)
- Experimental Studies
- Longitudinal Studies (Change Over Time)
- Social Network Analysis (Connections)

Overall Impact:

This box summarizes key applications of quantitative research, highlighting its utility in measuring, testing, and identifying patterns within social data. By employing numerical data, statisticians can generate objective, generalizable insights crucial for policy, practice, and a foundation for a deeper understanding of complex social issues.

OER Text Box

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:06:17 PM WAT

Caption: Box 3.1 Applications of quantitative strategies in social research

Pilot questions 3.1

1. What do quantitative strategies rely on to study social phenomena?
2. Fill in the blank: One strength of quantitative strategies is their ability to produce _____ results.
3. What is one weakness of quantitative strategies?
4. Give one example of an application of quantitative strategies in social research.
5. Fill in the blank: Quantitative strategies are widely applied in social research where the aim is to measure _____ or test relationships.



3.2 Qualitative Strategies in Social Inquiry

3.2.1 Meaning and features of qualitative strategies

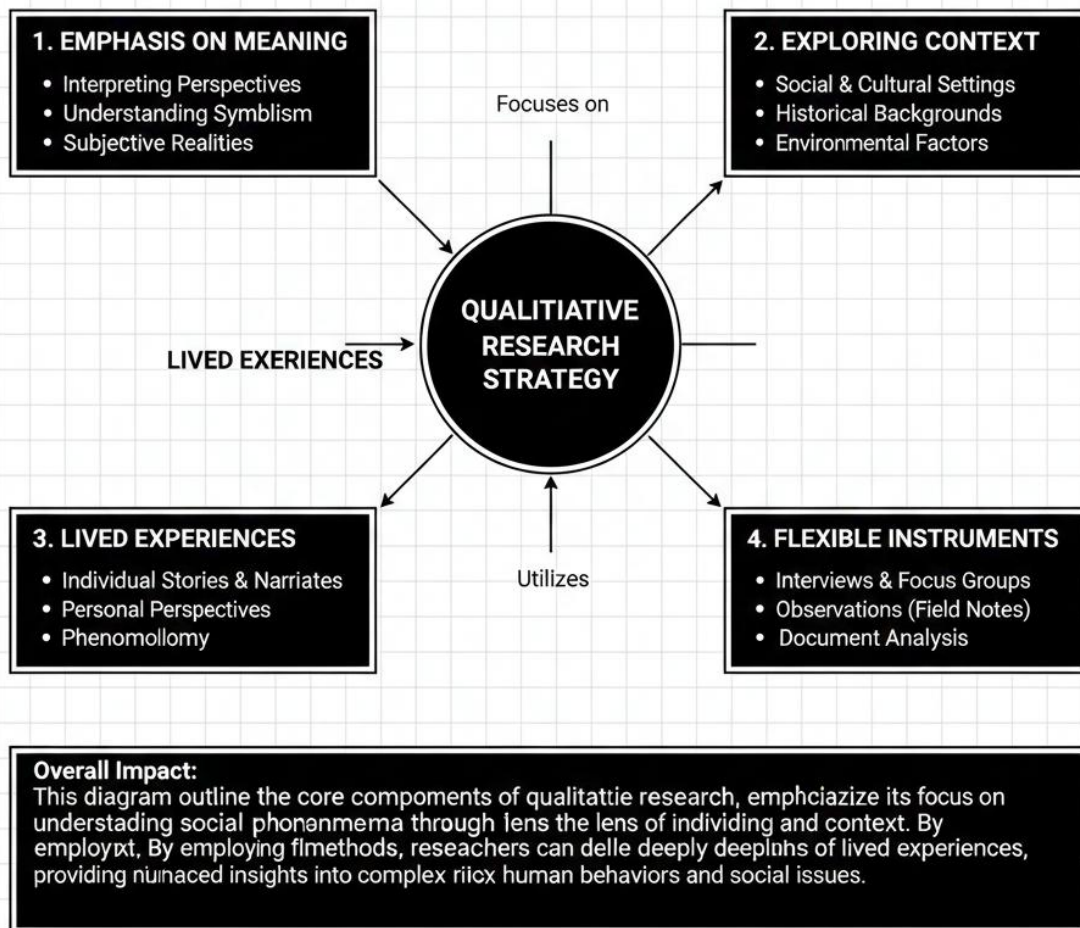
Qualitative strategies refer to research approaches that focus on non-numerical data such as words, images, and observations to explore social phenomena. Their main feature is the emphasis on depth, meaning, and context rather than measurement. Qualitative strategies often use methods such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, allowing researchers to capture lived experiences and perspectives. Unlike quantitative approaches, qualitative strategies are flexible and adaptive, enabling exploration of complex realities.

Fill in the blank: Qualitative strategies focus on non-_____ data such as words, images, and observations.



Box 1.301: Qualitative Research Strategy

Exploring In-Depth, Interpenetrative Approaches



OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:07:45 PM WAT

Diagram showing qualitative strategies with emphasis on meaning, context, and lived experiences. *Caption: Figure 3.2 Features of qualitative strategies*

3.2.2 Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative strategies

The **strengths** of qualitative strategies include their ability to capture rich detail, provide insights into human experiences, and explore phenomena in natural settings. They are particularly useful for understanding motivations, attitudes, and cultural practices. However, their **weaknesses** lie in limited generalisability, potential researcher bias, and challenges in replicating findings. Because qualitative data is often context-specific, it may not easily apply to wider populations.

Fill in the blank: One weakness of qualitative strategies is their limited _____ to wider populations.



Box 1..302: Qualitative Research Strengths & Weaknesses

OER

Comparative Methodological Approaches

1. Quantitative Research Strategy	Strengths (+)
• Rich Detail & • Rich, In-depth Understanding • Contextual Information • Explores Nuances/Meaning • Flexibility & Adaptability • Generates New Theories	• Artificial Settings • Ethical Concerns • Limited Generalizability • Researcher Bias • Subjective Bias • Snapshot Only/No Follow-up
1. Descriptive Research	Replicability
• Identifies Patterns • Foundation for Further Design • Generalizability Concerns	• Observer Bias • Ethical Concerns • Time-Consuming • Subjective Interpretations

Overall Impact: This table summarizes the trade-off of trade-off of common researches. While quantitative studies and studies into social phenomena rely on numbers and the influence of the researcher, the choice for understanding the research question is in the desired insights.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:08:08 PM WAT

Caption: Table 3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative strategies

3.2.3 Applications of qualitative strategies in social research

Qualitative strategies are applied in contexts where the aim is to explore meaning, understand experiences, or interpret social interactions. For example, ethnographic studies of cultural practices, interviews exploring personal narratives, or focus groups examining community attitudes all rely on qualitative approaches. These applications demonstrate how qualitative strategies provide depth and context that complement numerical data.

Fill in the blank: Qualitative strategies are applied in contexts where the aim is to explore _____ or interpret social interactions.





Box 1.303: Applications of Qualitative Strategies in Social Research

When to Use This Approach

1. Exploring Depth & Meaning:

- Understanding Experiences
- Cultural Contexts (Ethnography)
Individual Perspectives (Case Studies)
- Lived Realities
- New Theory Generation

2. Complex Social Phenomena:

- Sensitive Topics
- Group Dynamics (Focus Groups)
Organizational Cultures
- Discourse Analysis
- Community Needs

Overall Impact: This box illuminates key applications of qualitative research, highlighting its exploration of complex social issues from a depth, perspective. By focusing on depth, context, and qualitative strategies, it provides rich, nuanced insights that inform and generate new theoretical frameworks.

OER Text Box

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:10:01 PM WAT

Caption: Box 3.2 Applications of qualitative strategies in social research

Pilot questions 3.2

1. What do qualitative strategies focus on to explore social phenomena?
2. Fill in the blank: One weakness of qualitative strategies is their limited _____ to wider populations.
3. What is one strength of qualitative strategies?
4. Give one example of an application of qualitative strategies in social research.
5. Fill in the blank: Qualitative strategies are applied in contexts where the aim is to explore _____ or interpret social interactions.



3.3 Comparative Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Strategies

3.3.1 Key differences between quantitative and qualitative strategies

Quantitative and qualitative strategies differ in their focus, methods, and outcomes. **Quantitative strategies** emphasise numbers, measurement, and statistical analysis, while **qualitative strategies** emphasise meaning, context, and lived experiences. Quantitative approaches often use structured instruments such as surveys, whereas qualitative approaches rely on flexible methods like interviews or observations. These differences highlight how each strategy provides unique insights into social phenomena.

Fill in the blank: Quantitative strategies emphasise numbers and measurement, while qualitative strategies emphasise _____ and context.



Box 1.304: Quantitative vs. Qualitative Strategies Key Methodological Differences

OER

Quantitative Strategy (+)	Qualitative Strategy (-)
• Focus: Numbers & Measurement • Approach: Deductive (Hypothesis Testing) • Sample Size: Large & Representative • Data Type: Numerical, Statistical • Instruments: Structured (Surveys, Experiments) • Analysis: Statistical (Mean, SD, Regression) • Goal: Generalize, Causation • Researcher Role: Objective, Distant	• Focus: Meaning & Understanding • Approach: Inductive Generation • Small (Theory Generation) • Small & Purposes • Textual, Narrative • Instrument: Flexible, Contexts, Obs. • Analysis: Thematic, Analysis Obs.) • Goal: Context, Depth • Subjective, Involved

Overall Impact:

This table summarises the fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research strategies, highlighting their contrasting goals, approaches, and methods. Choosing the appropriate strands on the research question and desired depth of understanding.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:10:00 PM WAT

Caption: Table 3.3 Key differences between quantitative and qualitative strategies

3.3.2 Situations where each strategy is most appropriate

Each strategy is most appropriate in different contexts. Quantitative strategies are suitable when the aim is to measure prevalence, test hypotheses, or identify patterns across large populations. Qualitative strategies are appropriate when the goal is to explore meaning, understand experiences, or interpret social interactions. The choice depends on the research problem, the type of data required, and the depth or breadth of understanding sought.

Fill in the blank: Quantitative strategies are most appropriate when the aim is to measure _____ or test hypotheses.





Situations for Quantitative vs. Qualitative Strategies

Choosing the Right Approach

1. Quantitative Situations

- Measure Prevalence
- Test Hypotheses
- Large-Scale Surveys
- Evaluate Programs Numerically
- Examine Priorities
- Examine Causal Relationships

2. Qualitative Situations

- Explore Complex Phenomena
- Understand Lived Experiences
- In-Depth Interviews
- Discourse Narratives
- Generate New Theories
- Examine Cultural Context

Overall Impact: This box delineates situations where qualitative and quantitative strategies are most appropriate, emphasizing important factors that inform question and determine the depth of insights should guide choice of methodology for effective inquiry

OER Text Box

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:12:00 PM WAT

Caption: Box 3.3 Situations where each strategy is most appropriate

3.3.3 Limitations of relying solely on one strategy

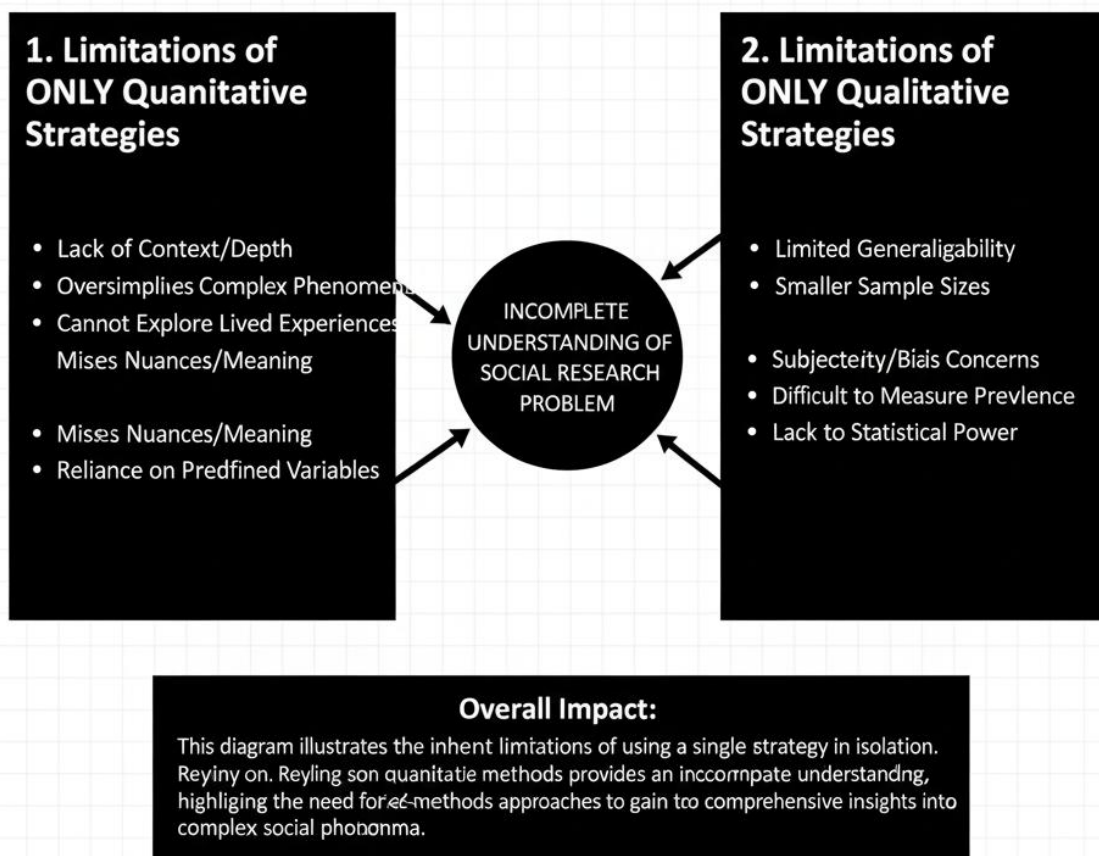
Relying solely on one strategy can limit the scope of research. Quantitative strategies may overlook context and meaning, while qualitative strategies may lack generalisability and statistical precision. Using only one approach risks producing incomplete findings, as social phenomena often require both breadth and depth of analysis. Recognising these limitations encourages researchers to consider integrating strategies when appropriate.

Fill in the blank: One limitation of relying solely on qualitative strategies is their lack of _____ to wider populations.



Box 1.305: Limitations of Uni-Strategy Research The Incomplete Picture

OER



OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:33:00 PM WAT

Diagram showing limitations of using only quantitative or only qualitative strategies. *Caption: Figure 3.3 Limitations of relying solely on one strategy*

Pilot questions 3.3

1. What is the main difference between quantitative and qualitative strategies?
2. Fill in the blank: Quantitative strategies emphasise numbers and measurement, while qualitative strategies emphasise _____ and context.
3. In which situations are quantitative strategies most appropriate?
4. Give one example of a situation where qualitative strategies are most appropriate.



5. Fill in the blank: One limitation of relying solely on qualitative strategies is their lack of _____ to wider populations.

3.4 Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Strategies (Mixed-Methods Approach)

3.4.1 Meaning and rationale for mixed-methods

Mixed-methods approach refers to the integration of both quantitative and qualitative strategies within a single study. Its main feature is the combination of numerical data with contextual insights, allowing researchers to benefit from the strengths of both approaches. The rationale for mixed-methods lies in its ability to provide a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena, as it captures both breadth and depth. For example, a survey may measure the prevalence of a behaviour, while interviews explain the reasons behind it.

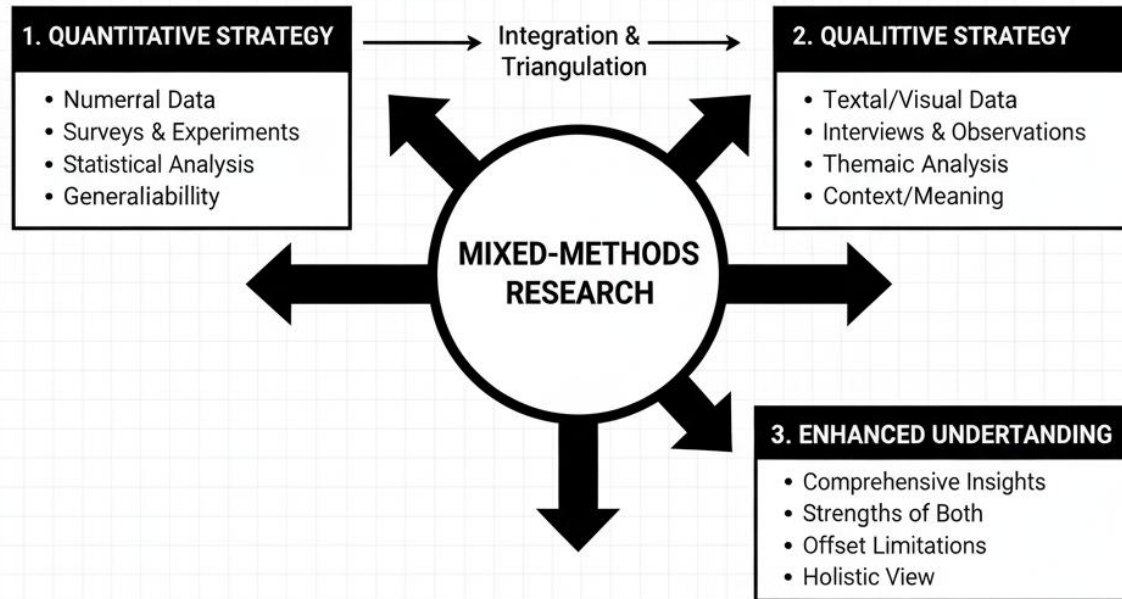
Fill in the blank: The mixed-methods approach combines numerical data with _____ insights to provide a comprehensive understanding.



Box 1.306: Mixed-Methods Research Design

Combining Strategies for a Complete Picture

OER



This diagram illustrates the mixed-methods approach, which synergistically combines quantitative and qualitative strategies. By integrating data sources, techniques, researchers gain a more comprehensive, and a holistic understanding of complex social phenomena, offsetting, offsetting an limitations of using a single strategy alone.

OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:13:41 PM WAT

Diagram showing mixed-methods approach combining quantitative (numbers, measurement) and qualitative (meaning, context) strategies. *Caption: Figure 3.4 Features of mixed-methods approach*

3.4.2 Strengths and weaknesses of mixed-methods

The **strengths** of mixed-methods include its ability to triangulate findings, enhance validity, and provide richer insights by combining different types of data. It allows researchers to answer complex questions that neither quantitative nor qualitative strategies alone could fully address. However, its **weaknesses** include the demand for more resources, time, and expertise. Mixed-methods studies can be challenging to design and interpret, as they require balancing different data types and methodological traditions.



Fill in the blank: One strength of mixed-methods is its ability to _____ findings by combining different types of data.

Box 1.307: Mixed-Methods Research Strengths & Weaknesses

OER

Comparative Methodological Approaches

Strengths (+)	Weaknesses (-)
1. Comprehensive Insights	1. Time-Consuming
2. Stronger Validation (Triangulation)	2. Resource-Intensive
3. Offsets Limitations of Each Strategy	3. Requires Diverse Skills
4. Explores Complexity & Context	5. Design Complexity
5. Generates New Hypotheses	5. Integration Challenges
6. More Complete Answers	6. Potential for Discrepancies

Overall Impact:

This table summarizes the trade-off of mixed-methods research, highlighting its strengths for rich, comprehensive insights by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. While it demonstrates the approach can overcome the inherent limitations of single-strategy designs, yielding a more nuanced and holistic understanding of complex social phenomena.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:14:20 PM WAT

Caption: Table 3.4 Strengths and weaknesses of mixed-methods approach

3.4.3 Examples of mixed-methods applications in social research

Mixed-methods are applied in contexts where both numerical measurement and contextual understanding are needed. For example, a study on education may use surveys to measure student performance and interviews to explore teaching experiences. Similarly, health research may combine statistical data on disease prevalence with focus groups on patient experiences. These applications show how mixed-methods provide balanced evidence for policy-making and theory development.



Fill in the blank: Mixed-methods are applied in contexts where both numerical measurement and _____ understanding are needed.

Box 1.308: Applications of Mixed-Mixed-Methods Strategies

Bringing Diverse Insights Together



1. Explonatory Designs:

- Quant. (Survey) then Qual. (Interviews)
Use qual. to explant. findings
- E.g., Survey on health trends + interviews to understand experiences
- Program Evaluation (Effectivness & & Lived Impac)

2. Exploratory Designs:

- Qual. (Interviews) then Quant.
Use qual. to develop quant tools
- E.g. Interviews on social media use + survey development
- New Thory Generation (Qual) + Testing
Testing (Quant)

Overall Impact: This box provides examples of how mixed-methods are applied in research, illusard, illustraing how combining quantinative strategies an holistic and qualitative offers a momprehhensive understanding of complex phoxema. These designs allow researchers to explore, **explain**, and **validate** findings of multiple perspectives.

OER Text Box Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:15:19 PM WAT

Caption: Box 3.4 Examples of mixed-methods applications in social research

Pilot questions 3.4

1. What does the mixed-methods approach aim to achieve?
2. Fill in the blank: One strength of mixed-methods is its ability to _____ findings.
3. What is one weakness of mixed-methods?
4. Give one example of a mixed-methods application in social research.



5. Fill in the blank: Mixed-methods are applied in contexts where both numerical measurement and _____ understanding are needed.

Series summary

This Series has explored the strategies that underpin social inquiry, showing how different approaches shape the way researchers collect and interpret data. We began with quantitative strategies, focusing on their reliance on numerical data, statistical analysis, and structured instruments. We then examined qualitative strategies, highlighting their emphasis on meaning, context, and lived experiences. Following that, we compared the two approaches, identifying their key differences, appropriate contexts, and limitations when used in isolation. Finally, we considered the mixed-methods approach, which integrates both strategies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena.

By working through these Parts, you should now be able to define, evaluate, and apply quantitative and qualitative strategies, compare their strengths and weaknesses, assess when each is most appropriate, and explain the rationale for integrating them through mixed-methods. In doing so, you have achieved the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs 3.1 to 3.12), equipping you with the ability to select and justify strategies that best address diverse research problems in social inquiry.

Glossary of terms

- **Applications of quantitative strategies:** Examples of how numerical approaches are used in social research, such as surveys, experiments, and statistical analyses.
- **Applications of qualitative strategies:** Examples of how non-numerical approaches are used in social research, such as interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic studies.
- **Comparative analysis:** The process of examining similarities and differences between quantitative and qualitative strategies to determine their appropriate use.
- **Generalisability:** The extent to which findings from a study can be applied to wider populations beyond the sample studied.
- **Mixed-methods approach:** A research strategy that integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena.
- **Quantitative strategies:** Research approaches that rely on numerical data, measurement, and statistical analysis to study social phenomena.
- **Qualitative strategies:** Research approaches that focus on non-numerical data such as words, images, and observations to explore meaning, context, and lived experiences.
- **Triangulation:** The use of multiple methods or data sources in research to cross-check and strengthen findings.



- **Validity:** The degree to which a research method or instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure.
- **Variables:** Measurable characteristics or factors in quantitative research that can change and be analysed statistically.

Concept check questions [Series 3]

Objective questions

1. Quantitative strategies rely on _____ data and statistical techniques. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. Which strategy focuses on meaning, context, and lived experiences? (Linked to SLO 3.4)
3. One strength of quantitative strategies is their ability to produce _____ results. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
4. One weakness of qualitative strategies is their limited _____ to wider populations. (Linked to SLO 3.5)
5. The mixed-methods approach combines numerical data with _____ insights. (Linked to SLO 3.10)

Short-answer questions

6. State one feature of quantitative strategies. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
7. Explain one weakness of quantitative strategies. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
8. Give one example of an application of qualitative strategies in social research. (Linked to SLO 3.6)
9. Why is comparative analysis of quantitative and qualitative strategies important? (Linked to SLO 3.7)
10. What is one strength of mixed-methods approaches? (Linked to SLO 3.11)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative strategies, providing examples of when they are most useful. (Linked to SLOs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)
12. Evaluate the applications of qualitative strategies in social research, highlighting both their advantages and limitations. (Linked to SLOs 3.4, 3.5, 3.6)
13. Compare quantitative and qualitative strategies, explaining situations where each is most appropriate. (Linked to SLOs 3.7, 3.8)
14. Discuss the limitations of relying solely on one strategy and explain how mixed-methods can address these limitations. (Linked to SLOs 3.9, 3.10, 3.11)



15. Demonstrate examples of mixed-methods applications in social research and explain their value. (Linked to SLO 3.12)

Answers to concept check questions [Series 3]

Objective questions

1. Numerical.
2. Qualitative strategies.
3. Generalisable.
4. Generalisability.
5. Contextual.

Short-answer questions

6. They use measurable variables and statistical analysis.
7. They may overlook meaning and context, reducing complex realities to numbers.
8. Ethnographic studies of cultural practices.
9. It helps researchers choose the most suitable strategy for their research problem.
10. It triangulates findings and enhances validity.

Long-answer questions

11. **Basic response:** Quantitative strategies provide precise measurements and generalisable results but may overlook context. They are most useful in surveys or large-scale studies. **Value-added response:** Quantitative strategies are powerful in identifying patterns across populations, such as literacy rates or health behaviours. However, they risk oversimplifying social realities. Their usefulness lies in providing evidence for policy-making and hypothesis testing.

12. **Basic response:** Qualitative strategies capture rich detail and lived experiences but lack generalisability. **Value-added response:** They are particularly valuable in exploring cultural practices, personal narratives, and community attitudes. While they provide depth, researchers must address bias and replication challenges to strengthen credibility.

13. **Basic response:** Quantitative strategies are appropriate for measuring prevalence and testing hypotheses, while qualitative strategies are suitable for exploring meaning and experiences. **Value-added response:** Quantitative approaches are best for large-scale surveys, while qualitative approaches excel in case studies or ethnography. Choosing between them depends on whether breadth or depth of understanding is required.

14. **Basic response:** Relying solely on one strategy can limit findings, as quantitative strategies miss context and qualitative strategies lack generalisability. **Value-added response:** Mixed-methods address these limitations by combining breadth and depth. For example, surveys can measure prevalence while interviews explain motivations, producing more comprehensive insights.



15. **Basic response:** Mixed-methods applications include combining surveys with interviews or statistical data with focus groups. **Value-added response:** They add value by providing balanced evidence for policy-making and theory development. For instance, education studies may use test scores alongside teacher interviews to capture both performance and experience.

Answers to pilot questions [Series 3]

Pilot questions 3.1

1. Numerical data and statistical techniques.
2. Generalisable.
3. They may overlook meaning and context.
4. Surveys measuring literacy rates.
5. Prevalence.

Pilot questions 3.2

1. Non-numerical data such as words, images, and observations.
2. Generalisability.
3. Captures rich detail and lived experiences.
4. Ethnographic studies of cultural practices.
5. Meaning.

Pilot questions 3.3

1. Quantitative strategies emphasise numbers and measurement, while qualitative strategies emphasise meaning and context.
2. Meaning.
3. Measuring prevalence, testing hypotheses, identifying patterns.
4. Exploring personal narratives through interviews.
5. Generalisability.

Pilot questions 3.4

1. To provide a comprehensive understanding by combining quantitative and qualitative strategies.
2. Triangulate.
3. Requires more resources, time, and expertise.
4. Education studies combining surveys and interviews.



5. Contextual.

References and attributions [Series 3]

Course content references

- SOC 301: Methods for Social Research (course document provided).
- Concepts and definitions of quantitative, qualitative, comparative, and mixed-methods strategies were adapted directly from the course outline.

- **Course code: SOC 301**
- **Course title: Methods for Social Research**
- **Course credit load: 4**

SERIES 4: Evaluating Strengths, Weaknesses, and Justifications of Methods

Series outline

- **Part 4.1 Evaluating strengths of methods**
 - 4.1.1 Meaning of strengths in research methods
 - 4.1.2 Examples of strengths across different methods
 - 4.1.3 Implications of strengths for research outcomes
- **Part 4.2 Evaluating weaknesses of methods**
 - 4.2.1 Meaning of weaknesses in research methods
 - 4.2.2 Examples of weaknesses across different methods
 - 4.2.3 Implications of weaknesses for research outcomes
- **Part 4.3 Justifying the choice of methods**
 - 4.3.1 Criteria for justification of methods
 - 4.3.2 Linking justification to research problems
 - 4.3.3 Examples of justified method selection in social research
- **Part 4.4 Balancing strengths, weaknesses, and justifications**
 - 4.4.1 Integrating evaluation into research design
 - 4.4.2 Addressing limitations while maximising strengths
 - 4.4.3 Case illustrations of balanced method evaluation



Introduction

In the last Series, we examined quantitative and qualitative strategies in social inquiry, comparing their strengths, weaknesses, and contexts of application, and concluded with the mixed-methods approach. Building on that foundation, this Series focuses on evaluating research methods more critically. It is important because every method has advantages and limitations, and researchers must be able to justify their choices to ensure credibility and relevance in their work.

The aim of this Series is to enable you to identify and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods, and to justify method selection in relation to specific research problems. By doing so, you will develop the ability to balance methodological considerations and make informed decisions in social research.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the strengths of methods, considering their meaning, examples, and implications for research outcomes. Next, we will move on to weaknesses, examining how they affect the reliability and scope of findings. Following that, we will focus on justifications, looking at criteria for method selection and examples of justified choices in social research. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing how strengths, weaknesses, and justifications can be balanced within research design, supported by case illustrations.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1** define the meaning of strengths in research methods,
- **SLO 4.2** illustrate examples of strengths across different methods,
- **SLO 4.3** analyse the implications of strengths for research outcomes,
- **SLO 4.4** define the meaning of weaknesses in research methods,
- **SLO 4.5** identify examples of weaknesses across different methods,
- **SLO 4.6** evaluate the implications of weaknesses for research outcomes,
- **SLO 4.7** explain the criteria for justifying the choice of methods,
- **SLO 4.8** apply justification of methods to specific research problems,
- **SLO 4.9** demonstrate examples of justified method selection in social research,
- **SLO 4.10** integrate evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, and justifications into research design,
- **SLO 4.11** assess how limitations can be addressed while maximising strengths, and
- **SLO 4.12** analyse case illustrations of balanced method evaluation.



4.1 Evaluating Strengths of Methods

4.1.1 Meaning of strengths in research methods

Strengths in research methods refer to the positive qualities or advantages that make a method effective in producing credible, reliable, and useful findings. These strengths may include aspects such as accuracy, efficiency, flexibility, or the ability to capture rich detail. Recognising strengths helps researchers understand why a method is valuable and how it contributes to achieving the aims of a study.

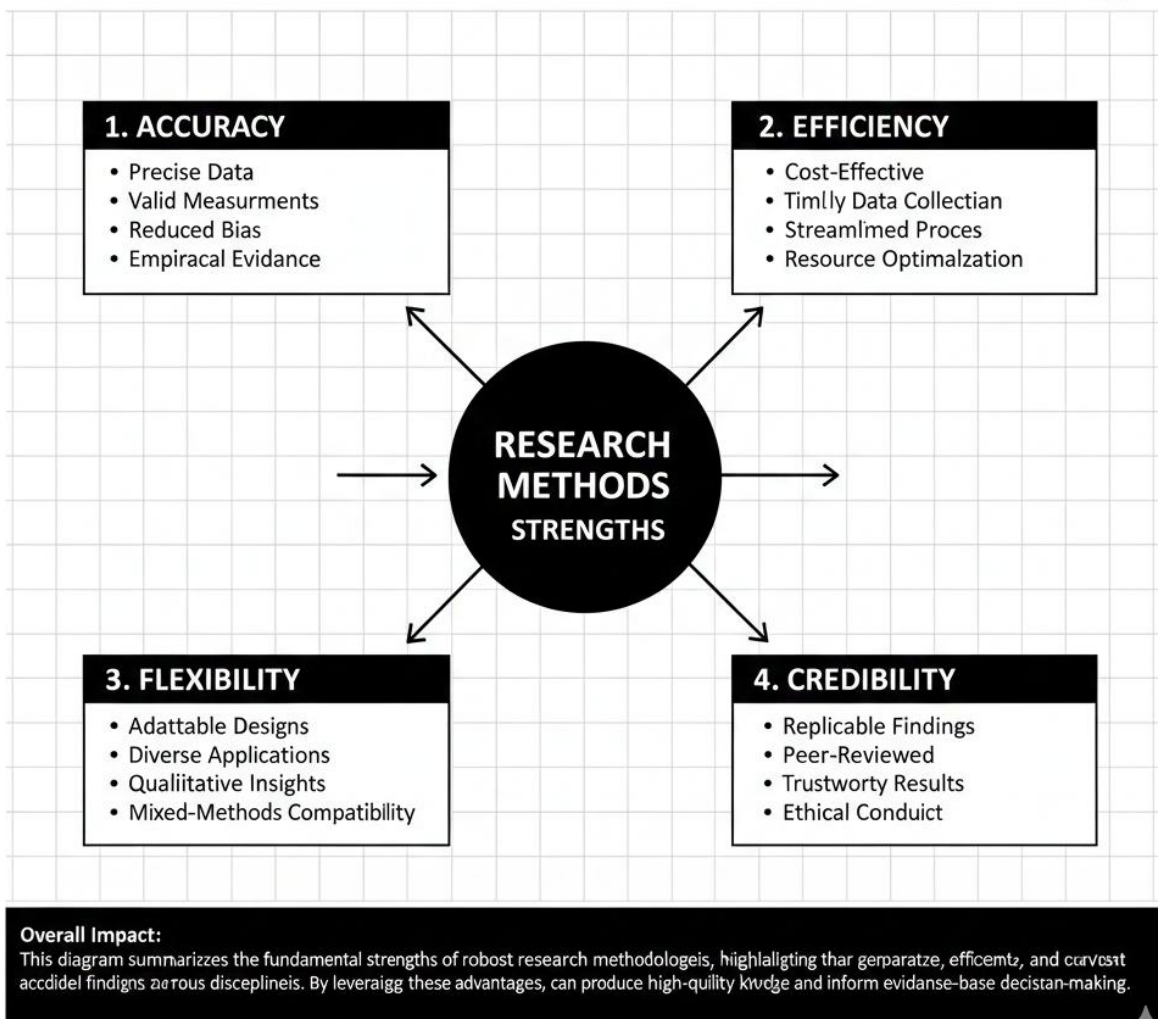
Fill in the blank: Strengths in research methods refer to the _____ qualities that make a method effective.



Box 1.309: Strengths of Research Methods

Key Advantages for Reliable Findings

OER



OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:17:03 PM WAT

Diagram showing strengths of research methods such as accuracy, efficiency, flexibility, and credibility. *Caption: Figure 4.1 Features of strengths in research methods*

4.1.2 Examples of strengths across different methods

Different research methods demonstrate strengths in unique ways. For instance, **quantitative methods** are strong in producing generalisable results and precise measurements, while **qualitative methods** excel in capturing depth, meaning, and lived experiences. Historical methods provide valuable context and trace developments over time, whereas experimental methods are strong in testing cause-and-effect relationships. These examples show that strengths are not uniform but depend on the nature of the method.



Fill in the blank: Quantitative methods are strong in producing _____ results, while qualitative methods excel in capturing depth and meaning.

Box 1.310: Examples of Strengths Across Research Methods

Methodological Advantages in Practice

Research Method	Examples of Strengths
1. Experimental Research	• Establishes Cause-Effect Relationships High Internal Validity
2. Survey Research	• Controlled Environment
2. Case Study Research	• Large Understdnd Sizes Contextual Detail
3. Case Study Research	• Explores Rare Phonomna
4. Ethnography	• Rich, Detailed Cultural Insights • Lived Exerion (Validation)
5. Mixed-Methods Research	• Offests Limitations of Each Strategy

Overall Impact: This table illustrates how different research methods bring unique strengths to the reseearch process. By choosing thapporiats fo given appropriate method question, reseahachchers can leverage thes leverage these advantages to produce credile, credile, robust, and insisitful fnisigtul findighul findings that contribute a holistic understanding of complex sociax social phohoma.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:18:18 PM WAT

Caption: Table 4.1 Examples of strengths across different methods

4.1.3 Implications of strengths for research outcomes

The strengths of methods directly influence the quality of research outcomes. A method with strong features enhances credibility, ensures findings are relevant, and increases confidence in conclusions. For example, the generalisability of quantitative methods allows results to inform policy decisions, while the depth of qualitative methods provides insights into human behaviour. Recognising implications helps researchers select methods that align with their objectives and maximise the value of their findings.



Box 1.301: Implications of Quantitative Strategies Strengths for Outcomes

Translating Methodical Approach into Findings



1. Enhanced Credibility & Reliability:

- More Trustworthy Findings
- Increased Evaluation (Effectiveness)
- Increased Confidence Results
- Supports Replication & Verification
- Reduces Bias & Errors

2. Deeper Understanding & Utility

- Comprehensive Insights
- Informs Effective Solutions & Policies & Policies
- Generates New Theories Hypotheses
- Addresses Complex Problems policy (Connections)

Overall Impact:

This box summarizes how the strengths of robust research methods highlighting the significant impacts of these objective findings can only be credible but provide the contribution, action theory, and policy, and practices across various social sciences.

Pilot questions 4.1

- 

5. Fill in the blank: The strengths of methods directly influence the _____ of research outcomes.

4.2 Evaluating Weaknesses of Methods

4.2.1 Meaning of weaknesses in research methods

Weaknesses in research methods refer to the limitations or drawbacks that reduce the effectiveness, reliability, or scope of findings. These weaknesses may include issues such as bias, lack of generalisability, or difficulty in replicating results. Identifying weaknesses is important because it helps researchers anticipate challenges and take steps to minimise their impact on the study.

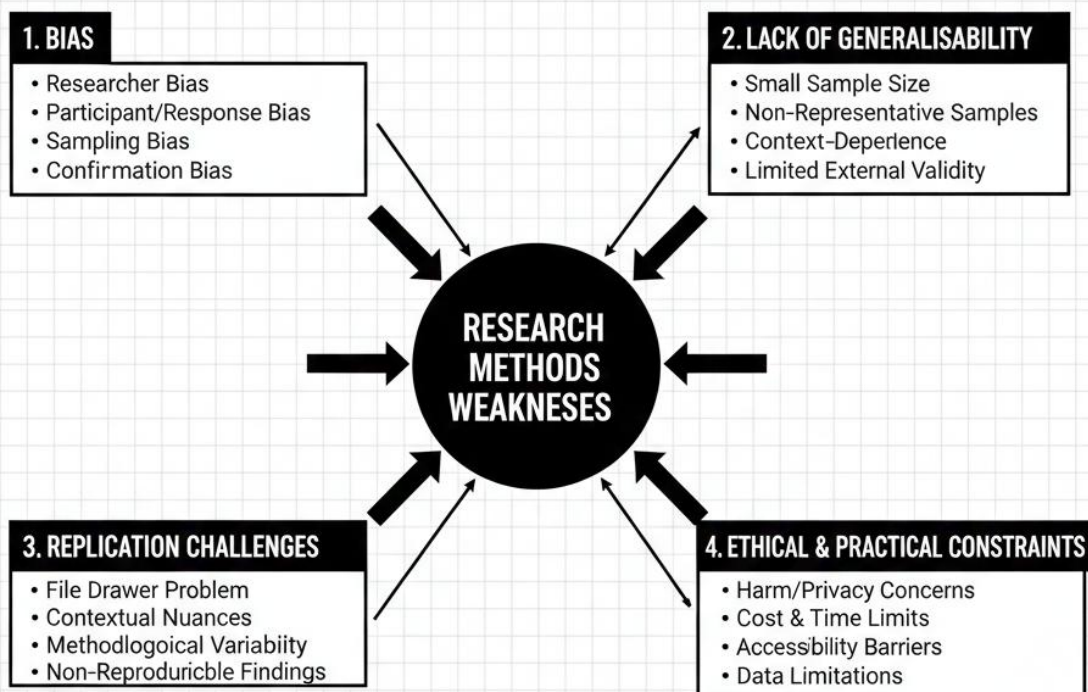
Fill in the blank: Weaknesses in research methods refer to the _____ that reduce the effectiveness of findings.



Box 1.312: Weaknesses of Research Methods

Inherent Challenges in Methodological Approaches

OER



Overall Impact: This diagram illustrates the inherent limitations and challenges of various research methods, highlighting factors that can compromise the reliability and applicability of findings. Understanding these weaknesses is crucial for designing rigorous research results with caution, emphasizing the need for robust methodologies and transparency in research.

OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:19:52 PM WAT

Diagram showing weaknesses of research methods such as bias, lack of generalisability, and replication challenges. *Caption: Figure 4.2 Features of weaknesses in research methods*

4.2.2 Examples of weaknesses across different methods

Different methods reveal weaknesses in different ways. For example, **quantitative methods** may oversimplify complex realities by reducing them to numbers, while **qualitative methods** may lack generalisability and be prone to researcher bias. Historical methods may struggle with incomplete records, and experimental methods may face ethical concerns or artificial settings that limit real-world applicability. These examples show that weaknesses are inherent but can be managed with careful planning.

Fill in the blank: Qualitative methods may lack _____ and be prone to researcher bias.



Box 1.313: Examples of Weaknesses Across Research Methods

OER

Methooglial Limitations in Practice

		Examples of Weaknesses
1. Experimental Research	• Artificial Settings • Ethical Concerns • Limited External Validity	• Response Bias • Social Desirability • Non-Response Bias
2. Survey Research	• Limited Generalisability	• Causality Issues
3. Case Study Research	• Subjective Interpretation	• Difficult to Replicate
4. Ethnography	• Subjective Interpretation	• Complexity in Design • Time-Consuming • Integration Challenges
5. Mixed-Methods Research		• Resource-Intensive • Conflicting Findings

Overall Impact:

This table summarises inherent weakness across different research methods. Understanding these limitations is interpreting research findings critically and designing more rigorous studies. Researchers must be aware of potential biases and generalisability issues.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:20:35 PM WAT

Caption: Table 4.2 Examples of weaknesses across different methods

4.2.3 Implications of weaknesses for research outcomes

The weaknesses of methods affect the credibility and applicability of research outcomes. For instance, oversimplification in quantitative methods may lead to conclusions that miss important context, while qualitative bias may reduce trust in findings. Historical gaps can distort interpretations, and experimental limitations may restrict general use of results. Recognising these implications allows researchers to design studies that acknowledge limitations and strengthen validity.

Fill in the blank: The weaknesses of methods affect the _____ and applicability of research outcomes.



Box 1.314: Implications of Research Weaknesses for Outcomes

OER

Translating Methodical Limitations into Findings

1. Reduced Credibility & Reliability

- Less Trustworthy Findings
- Limited Evaluation (Effectiveness)
- Low Confidence Results
- Challenges to Replication & Verification
- Increased Bias & Errors

2. Shallower Understanding & Utility

- Incomplete Insights
- Informs Less Effective Solutions & Policies
- Hinders New Theory Generation
- Fails to Address Complex Problems (Connections)

Overall Impact: This box summarizes how the weaknesses of research methods highlight some possible impacts on the effectiveness of evidence-based practice, policy, and practice across various social sciences.

OER Text Box

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:21:11 PM WAT

Caption: Box 4.2 Implications of weaknesses for research outcomes

Pilot questions 4.2

1. What do weaknesses in research methods refer to?
2. Fill in the blank: Qualitative methods may lack _____ and be prone to researcher bias.
3. Give one example of a weakness of quantitative methods.
4. What is one implication of weaknesses for research outcomes?
5. Fill in the blank: The weaknesses of methods affect the _____ and applicability of research outcomes.



4.3 Justifying the Choice of Methods

4.3.1 Criteria for justification of methods

Justification in research methods refers to the reasoning or explanation for why a particular method is chosen for a study. Strong justification ensures that the method aligns with the research problem, objectives, and type of data required. Common criteria include relevance to the research question, feasibility in terms of resources, ethical considerations, and the ability to produce credible findings.

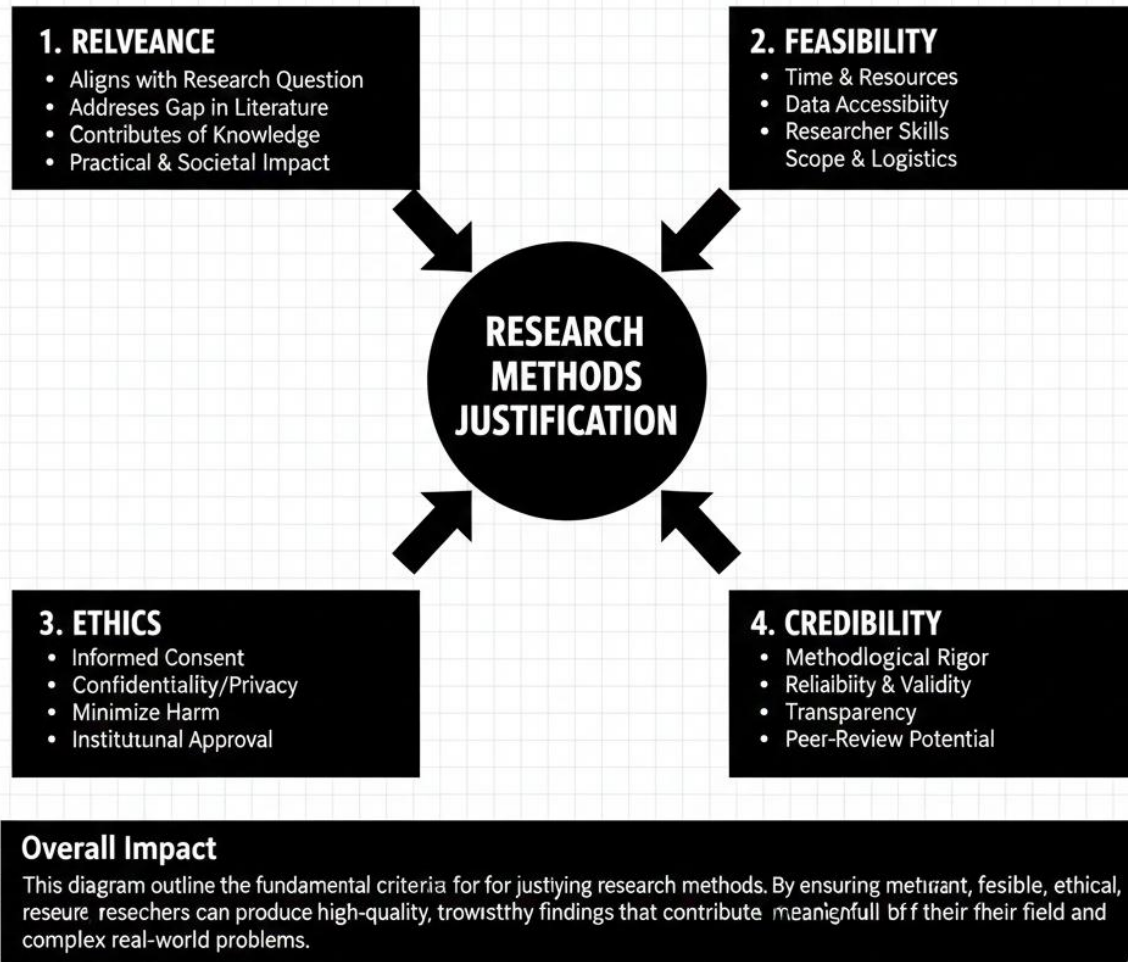
Fill in the blank: Justification in research methods refers to the _____ for why a particular method is chosen.



Box 1.315: Justification of Research Methods

Key Criteria for Method Selection

OER



OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:21:49 PM WAT

Diagram showing criteria for justification of methods such as relevance, feasibility, ethics, and credibility. *Caption: Figure 4.3 Criteria for justification of methods*

4.3.2 Linking justification to research problems

The justification of methods must be directly linked to the research problem. For example, if the problem requires measuring prevalence, quantitative methods may be justified. If the problem involves exploring lived experiences, qualitative methods may be more suitable. The link between justification and research problems ensures that the chosen method is not arbitrary but carefully aligned with the purpose of the study.

Fill in the blank: The justification of methods must be directly linked to the _____ problem.



Box 1.315: Justification of Research Methods

Linkg Criteria to Research Problems - Examples

OER

Research Problem	Method Justification
1. "Why are voter turnout rates low in local elections?"	1. Quantitative survey (reasures preasunce; feasisility: large sample; ethics: anovpmiity; statistical statistical power).
2. "How does soedia use impact teenage adoption in rural communities?"	2. Mixed-methods (reallance: (reabllance: depth & breadth; feasisibility: combines data ethics: informed consent, triarluguation).
	3. Qualtativa interviews (reabllance: explores context, feasisibility: sample depth depth; privacy, rich insights.

Overall Impact

This diagram outline the how berrch andasearch peilghartal necsticcata nesccicate specifig meturant, justifficatties, reseure resechers can produce high-quality, trowwstry ethics, and contribute menignfull bff theirs their oartfies for complex real-world finblems.

OER Text Box

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:23:39 PM WAT

Caption: Box 4.3 Linking justification to research problems

4.3.3 Examples of justified method selection in social research

Examples of justified method selection demonstrate how researchers explain their choices. A study on literacy rates may justify using surveys for large-scale measurement. A study on cultural identity may justify using interviews to capture personal narratives. A health intervention study may justify experiments to test cause-and-effect relationships. These examples show that justification strengthens the credibility of research design and outcomes.

Fill in the blank: A study on cultural identity may justify using _____ to capture personal narratives.



Box 1.317: Justified Method Selection in Social Research

Linking Research Questions to Methodical Choices



Research Question	Justified Method & Rationale
1. "What factors influence turnout?"	Method: Quantitative Survey. Rationale: High relevance to measure prevalence and correlations; feasible for large-scale data collection; ethical due to anonymity; ethical credible; credible with statistical power
1. "What factors influence turnout in local elections?"	Method: Mixed-Methods (Qualitative Interviews + Quantitative Survey)
2. "How do social media use and body image intersect in teenage girls?"	Qualitative explores depth & context, ethical, ethical sensitivity; Quantitative provides prevalence & generalizability; combined for comprehensive credible insights
3. "What are lived experiences of refugee girls?"	Qualitative Interviews & Refugee Ethnography
3. Qualitative Interviews & Ethnography & urban resettlement?	Rationale: High relevance explore lived experience & meaning; feasible for in-depth engagement & rapport; credible through rich, contextual data & reflexivity

Overall Impact:

This table presents examples of well-justified method selections, demonstrating how research design aligns specific questions, ensuring findings are relevant, feasible, ethical, and reliable and credible. Researchers link their methods to their research problem to produce the reliable and impactful social insights.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:23:33 PM WAT

Caption: Table 4.3 Examples of justified method selection in social research

Pilot questions 4.3

1. What does justification in research methods refer to?
2. Fill in the blank: The justification of methods must be directly linked to the _____ problem.
3. Give one criterion for justifying the choice of methods.
4. Provide one example of justified method selection in social research.
5. Fill in the blank: A study on cultural identity may justify using _____ to capture personal narratives.



4.4 Balancing Strengths, Weaknesses, and Justifications

4.4.1 Integrating evaluation into research design

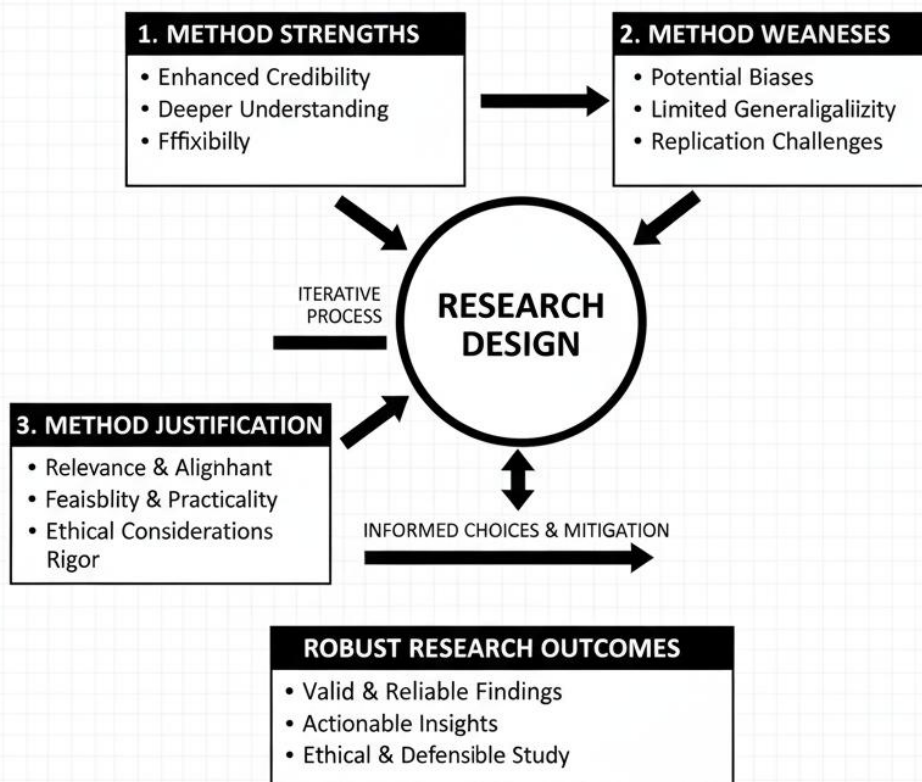
Balancing strengths, weaknesses, and justifications is a critical step in designing effective research. **Integration** means considering all three aspects together rather than in isolation. A researcher must weigh the advantages of a method against its limitations and provide a clear justification for why it is still appropriate. This process ensures that the research design is both credible and practical, while also addressing the complexity of social phenomena.

Fill in the blank: Balancing strengths, weaknesses, and justifications ensures that the research design is both _____ and practical.



Box 1.318: Integrative Research Design Synthesizing Strengths, Weaknesses, and Justification

OER



This diagram illustrates the integrative process of designing robust research by considering method strengths and weaknesses, and justifying key criteria. This iterative process leads to informed decisions that maximize the quality and impact of research findings.

OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:24:17 PM WAT

Diagram showing integration of strengths, weaknesses, and justifications into research design.

Caption: Figure 4.4 Integrating evaluation into research design

4.4.2 Addressing limitations while maximising strengths

A key part of balancing methods is learning how to address limitations while maximising strengths. For example, if a method lacks generalisability, a researcher may combine it with another method to broaden applicability. If bias is a concern, strategies such as triangulation or peer review can be used to strengthen validity. By actively managing weaknesses, researchers can ensure that the strengths of their chosen methods are fully realised.

Fill in the blank: Strategies such as _____ or peer review can be used to strengthen validity when bias is a concern.



Box 1.319: Optimize Research Design

Strategies for Addressing & Maximizing Strengths

1. Addressing Limitations:

- Mitigation Techniques
- Increased Sample Size (Qual)
- Triangulation (Mixed-Methods)
- Pilot Testing & Revision
- Control Groups (Quant)

2. Maximizing Strengths:

- Leverage Method's Purpose
- Deep Dive with Qual.
- Statistical Rigor with Quant.
- Stakeholder Collaboration
- Transparent Reporting

Overall Impact: This box outlines practical strategies for enhancing research design by proactively tackling inherent limitations and capitalizing on strengths. By employing these tactics, researchers can bolster the validity, reliability, and robustness of overall findings, leading to more robust and defensible conclusions.

OER Text Box Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:25:00 PM WAT

Caption: Box 4.4 Addressing limitations while maximising strengths

4.4.3 Case illustrations of balanced method evaluation

Case illustrations help demonstrate how strengths, weaknesses, and justifications can be balanced in practice. For instance, a community development study may use surveys for generalisable data but complement them with interviews to capture lived experiences. A health intervention may rely on experiments for cause-and-effect testing but acknowledge ethical limitations and justify safeguards. These examples show that balanced evaluation strengthens both the design and the credibility of research outcomes.

Fill in the blank: A community development study may use surveys for generalisable data but complement them with _____ to capture lived experiences.



Box 1.320: Case Illustrations of Balanced Method Evaluation

Applying Strengths & Mitigation in Practice

Research Case Study	Balanced Method Evaluation (Strengths + Mitigation)
1. "Impact of Digital Literacy on Youth Employment" (Mixed-Methods)	Strengths: Comprehensive insights, triangulation, context. Mitigation: Large sample (quant) + in-depth interviews (qual), transparent reporting of any discrepancies, pilot study
2. "Community-Based Mental Health Initiative" (Qualitative Focus)	Strengths: Deep understanding, lived experiences, flexibility Mitigation: Reflexivity journal to address bias, member checking findings, collection
3. "Effectiveness of a New Math Curriculum" (Quantitative Focus)	Strengths: Control group, pre-test/post-test design, multiple-choice + open-ended questions in survey, external validity assessment

Overall Impact: This table provides practical examples of how researchers achieve balanced method evaluations by leveraging strengths and proactively addressing limitations. By consciously integrating these strategies, studies produce more robust, credible, and applicable findings, contributing meaningfully to social science.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:26 PM WAT

Caption: Table 4.4 Case illustrations of balanced method evaluation

Pilot questions 4.4

1. What does integrating evaluation into research design mean?
2. Fill in the blank: Balancing strengths, weaknesses, and justifications ensures that the research design is both _____ and practical.
3. What is one strategy for addressing limitations while maximising strengths?
4. Give one example of a case illustration of balanced method evaluation.
5. Fill in the blank: A community development study may use surveys for generalisable data but complement them with _____ to capture lived experiences.



Series summary

This Series has focused on evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, and justifications of research methods, helping you to critically assess how different approaches contribute to credible and effective inquiry. We began by examining the meaning and examples of strengths, showing how they enhance the quality and relevance of research outcomes. We then moved on to weaknesses, identifying common limitations across methods and their implications for credibility and applicability. Following that, we explored justifications, considering the criteria for selecting methods and linking them directly to research problems. Finally, we discussed how strengths, weaknesses, and justifications can be balanced within research design, supported by case illustrations.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define and illustrate strengths and weaknesses, analyse their implications, explain and apply justification criteria, and integrate evaluation into research design. In doing so, you have achieved the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs 4.1 to 4.12), equipping you with the ability to critically evaluate and justify methodological choices while addressing limitations and maximising strengths in social research.

Glossary of terms

- **Addressing limitations:** Strategies used to minimise the weaknesses of a research method, such as triangulation or peer review.
- **Credibility:** The degree to which research findings are trustworthy and believable, often strengthened by strong methods and clear justification.
- **Integration:** The process of combining strengths, weaknesses, and justifications into a coherent research design.
- **Justification:** The reasoning or explanation for why a particular research method is chosen, based on criteria such as relevance, feasibility, ethics, and credibility.
- **Limitations:** The constraints or drawbacks of a research method that reduce its effectiveness or scope.
- **Strengths:** The positive qualities or advantages of a research method that enhance its effectiveness, reliability, and usefulness.
- **Triangulation:** The use of multiple methods or data sources to reduce bias and strengthen the validity of research findings.
- **Weaknesses:** The limitations or disadvantages of a research method that may affect the credibility or applicability of findings.

Concept check questions [Series 4]



Objective questions

1. Strengths in research methods refer to the _____ qualities that make a method effective. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. Which type of method is strong in producing generalisable results? (Linked to SLO 4.2)
3. Weaknesses in research methods refer to the _____ that reduce the effectiveness of findings. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
4. Which method is prone to researcher bias and limited generalisability? (Linked to SLO 4.5)
5. Justification in research methods refers to the _____ for why a particular method is chosen. (Linked to SLO 4.7)

Short-answer questions

6. State one implication of strengths for research outcomes. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
7. Give one example of a weakness of quantitative methods. (Linked to SLO 4.5)
8. Explain one criterion for justifying the choice of methods. (Linked to SLO 4.7)
9. Provide one example of justified method selection in social research. (Linked to SLO 4.9)
10. What is one strategy for addressing limitations while maximising strengths? (Linked to SLO 4.11)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the implications of strengths for research outcomes, providing examples of how they enhance credibility. (Linked to SLOs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)
12. Evaluate the weaknesses of qualitative methods, highlighting their impact on generalisability and bias. (Linked to SLOs 4.4, 4.5, 4.6)
13. Explain how justification of methods should be linked to research problems, with examples. (Linked to SLOs 4.7, 4.8, 4.9)
14. Discuss strategies for addressing limitations while maximising strengths, and explain their importance for research design. (Linked to SLOs 4.10, 4.11)
15. Demonstrate with case illustrations how strengths, weaknesses, and justifications can be balanced in social research. (Linked to SLO 4.12)

Answers to concept check questions [Series 4]

Objective questions

1. Positive.
2. Quantitative methods.
3. Limitations.



4. Qualitative methods.
5. Reasoning.

Short-answer questions

6. They enhance credibility and increase confidence in conclusions.
7. They may oversimplify complex realities.
8. Relevance to the research question.
9. Using interviews to study cultural identity.
10. Triangulation.

Long-answer questions

11. **Basic response:** Strengths enhance credibility by ensuring findings are reliable and relevant. For example, quantitative methods provide generalisable results. **Value-added response:** Strengths also influence how findings are applied in practice. For instance, generalisable survey results can inform national policy, while qualitative depth can guide community interventions.
12. **Basic response:** Qualitative methods may lack generalisability and be prone to researcher bias. **Value-added response:** These weaknesses can affect replication and trust in findings. However, strategies such as triangulation and transparency can reduce bias and strengthen validity.
13. **Basic response:** Justification must be linked to the research problem. For example, surveys are justified for measuring prevalence. **Value-added response:** Strong justification ensures credibility. For instance, interviews are justified when exploring lived experiences, while mixed-methods are justified when both breadth and depth are required.
14. **Basic response:** Strategies such as triangulation and peer review help address limitations while maximising strengths. **Value-added response:** These strategies improve validity and credibility. For example, combining surveys with interviews broadens applicability while maintaining depth.
15. **Basic response:** Case illustrations include community studies using surveys and interviews together. **Value-added response:** Balanced evaluation strengthens design. For example, health interventions may use experiments to test cause-and-effect but justify safeguards to address ethical concerns, ensuring both rigour and responsibility.

Answers to pilot questions [Series 4]

Pilot questions 4.1

1. Positive qualities or advantages that make a method effective.
2. Generalisable.



3. Capturing depth, meaning, and lived experiences.
4. They enhance credibility and increase confidence in conclusions.
5. Quality.

Pilot questions 4.2

1. Limitations or drawbacks that reduce effectiveness, reliability, or scope.
2. Generalisability.
3. Oversimplifies complex realities.
4. They reduce credibility and limit applicability.
5. Credibility.

Pilot questions 4.3

1. The reasoning or explanation for why a particular method is chosen.
2. Research.
3. Relevance to the research question.
4. Using surveys to measure literacy rates.
5. Interviews.

Pilot questions 4.4

1. Considering strengths, weaknesses, and justifications together in research design.
2. Credible.
3. Triangulation.
4. Community development study using surveys and interviews.
5. Interviews.

References and attributions [Series 4]

Course content references

- SOC 301: Methods for Social Research (course document provided).
- Definitions and explanations of strengths, weaknesses, and justifications were adapted directly from the Series outline and instructional content.

• Course code: SOC 301



- **Course title: Methods for Social Research**
- **Course credit load: 4**

SERIES 5: Ethics, Integrity, and Objectivity in Social Research

Series outline

- **Part 5.1 Understanding ethics in social research**
 - 5.1.1 Meaning of ethics in research
 - 5.1.2 Principles of ethical research practice
 - 5.1.3 Examples of ethical issues in social research
- **Part 5.2 Research integrity and responsible conduct**
 - 5.2.1 Definition of integrity in research
 - 5.2.2 Practices that promote integrity
 - 5.2.3 Consequences of misconduct in social research
- **Part 5.3 Ensuring objectivity in social research**
 - 5.3.1 Meaning of objectivity in research
 - 5.3.2 Threats to objectivity
 - 5.3.3 Strategies for maintaining objectivity
- **Part 5.4 Balancing ethics, integrity, and objectivity**
 - 5.4.1 Integrating ethical principles into research design
 - 5.4.2 Addressing dilemmas while maintaining integrity
 - 5.4.3 Case illustrations of balanced ethical and objective research

Introduction

In social research, the way findings are produced and presented is just as important as the findings themselves. Researchers are expected to uphold ethical standards, maintain integrity, and remain objective in order to ensure that their work is credible and trustworthy. Without these values, research risks losing its relevance, reliability, and acceptance within both academic and wider communities.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the knowledge and skills needed to recognise ethical principles, practise integrity, and maintain objectivity in social research. By doing so, you will be able to design and conduct studies that are both responsible and credible.

We shall commence this Series by exploring ethics in social research, focusing on its meaning, principles, and common issues. Next, we will move on to research integrity, examining practices that promote responsible conduct and the consequences of misconduct. Following that, we will consider objectivity, looking at its meaning, threats, and strategies for maintaining it. Finally, we



will wrap up by discussing how ethics, integrity, and objectivity can be balanced within research design, supported by case illustrations.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 5.1** define the meaning of ethics in social research,
- **SLO 5.2** explain the principles of ethical research practice,
- **SLO 5.3** identify examples of ethical issues in social research,
- **SLO 5.4** define integrity in research,
- **SLO 5.5** describe practices that promote integrity in social research,
- **SLO 5.6** analyse the consequences of misconduct in social research,
- **SLO 5.7** define the meaning of objectivity in research,
- **SLO 5.8** evaluate threats to objectivity in social research,
- **SLO 5.9** demonstrate strategies for maintaining objectivity,
- **SLO 5.10** integrate ethical principles into research design,
- **SLO 5.11** assess how dilemmas can be addressed while maintaining integrity, and
- **SLO 5.12** analyse case illustrations of balanced ethical and objective research.

5.1 Understanding Ethics in Social Research

5.1.1 Meaning of ethics in research

Ethics in research refers to the principles and standards that guide researchers in conducting studies responsibly and respectfully. It ensures that participants are protected, data is handled appropriately, and findings are reported honestly. Ethics is not just about following rules but about maintaining trust between researchers, participants, and society.

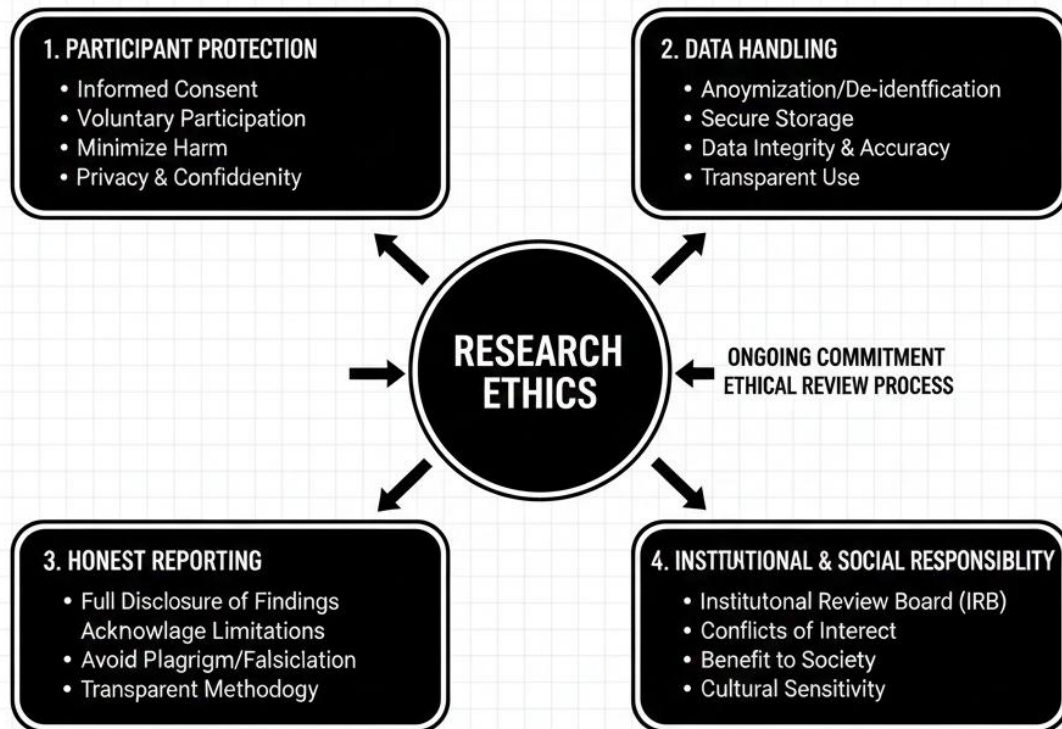
Fill in the blank: Ethics in research refers to the _____ and standards that guide researchers in conducting studies responsibly.



Box 1.321: Ethics in Research

Guiding Principles for Responsible Conduct

OER



Overall Impact: This diagram illustrates the fundamental ethical principles guiding responsible conduct. Adhering to these criteria ensures the protection of participants, the integrity of data, and the integrity of findings, fosters public trust and contributes to the advancement of knowledge in social sciences.

OER Diagram Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:27:22 PM WAT

Diagram showing ethics in research with elements such as participant protection, data handling, and honest reporting. *Caption: Figure 5.1 Meaning of ethics in research*

5.1.2 Principles of ethical research practice

The **principles of ethical research practice** provide a framework for responsible conduct. These include **respect for persons** (recognising autonomy and protecting vulnerable groups), **beneficence** (maximising benefits and minimising harm), **justice** (ensuring fairness in participation and outcomes), and **honesty** (reporting findings truthfully). These principles help researchers make decisions that uphold dignity and fairness throughout the research process.

Fill in the blank: The principle of _____ requires researchers to maximise benefits and minimise harm.



Box 1.322: Principles of Ethical Research Practice

Upholding Integrity & Responsibility

OER

1. Core Principles:

- Respect for Persons (Autonomy)
- Beneficimize Harm
- Justice
- Transology Limitations
- Veracity (Honesty)

2. Practical Applications:

- Informed Consent & Voluntary Participation
- Confidentiality & Integrity
- Data Security
- Transparency & Full Disclosure
- Independent Review (IRB)

Overall Impact: This box outlines the fundamental principles guiding conduct. Adhering to these criteria ensures the protection of participants' principles, safeguards surroundings, fosters public trust, and promotes knowledge in social sciences.

OER Text Box

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:28:58 PM WAT

Caption: Box 5.1 Principles of ethical research practice

5.1.3 Examples of ethical issues in social research

Ethical issues arise when research practices conflict with these principles. Examples include lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, misuse of data, exploitation of vulnerable groups, and falsification of results. Addressing these issues requires careful planning, transparency, and adherence to ethical guidelines. By anticipating potential problems, researchers can safeguard participants and maintain credibility.

Fill in the blank: One common ethical issue in social research is lack of _____ consent.



Box 1.323: Examples of Ethical Issues in Social Research

OER

Navigating Moral Dilemmas in Practice

Research Scenario	Ethical Issues & Concerns
1. Studying gang behavior in a low-income community	• Risk of harm/retaliation • Informed consent challenges • Privacy breaches
2. Survey on sensitive health practices in a cultural minority group	• Stigma & discrimination • Confidentiality breaches • Cultural sensitivity
3. Using social media data without user consent or anonymization	• Privacy violations • Lack of consent • Data ownership & misuse

Overall Impact: This table highlights prevalent ethical challenges in social research. Researchers must carefully consider these issues, prioritizing participant well-being, privacy, and informed consent to ensure responsible and justifiable studies.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:29:21 PM WAT

Caption: Table 5.1 Examples of ethical issues in social research

Pilot questions 5.1

1. What does ethics in research refer to?
2. Fill in the blank: The principle of _____ requires researchers to maximise benefits and minimise harm.
3. Give one principle of ethical research practice.
4. Provide one example of an ethical issue in social research.
5. Fill in the blank: One common ethical issue in social research is lack of _____ consent.



5.2 Research Integrity and Responsible Conduct

5.2.1 Definition of integrity in research

Integrity in research refers to the commitment to honesty, accuracy, and fairness in all aspects of the research process. It means avoiding practices such as falsification, fabrication, or plagiarism, and ensuring that data is collected, analysed, and reported truthfully. Integrity builds trust between researchers, participants, and the wider community, making research outcomes credible and respected.

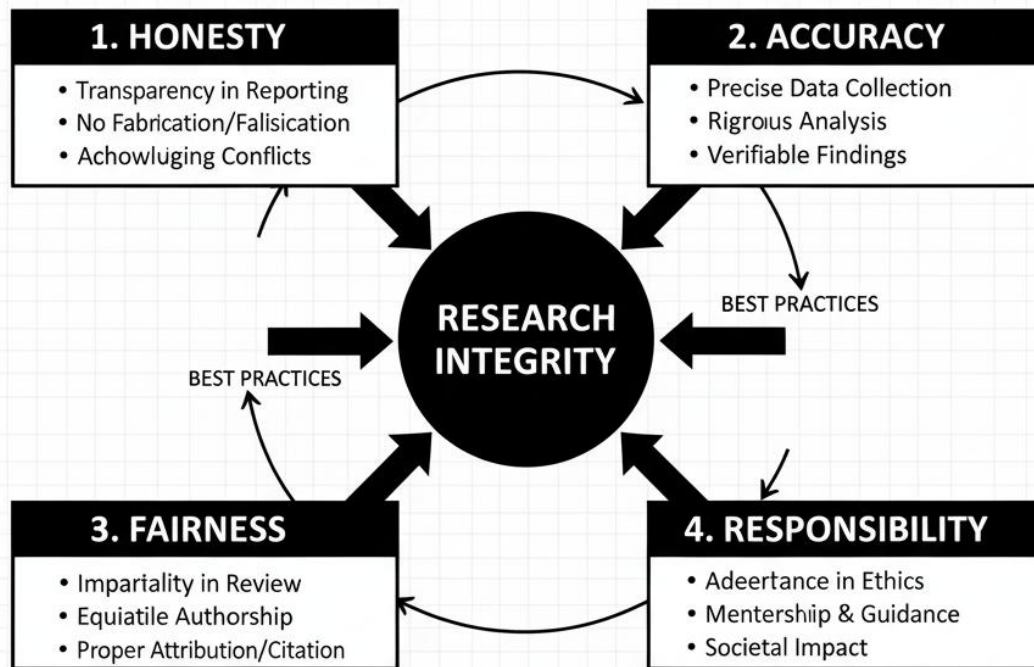
Fill in the blank: Integrity in research refers to the commitment to _____, accuracy, and fairness in all aspects of the research process.



Box 1.324: Research Integrity

Upluding Trust & Reliability in Scholarship

OER



Overall Impact: This diagram outlines the fundamental principles of research Integrity, which are crucial for the maintaining trust and knowledge. Upholding these values ensures the reliability, validity, and ethical research findings of across all disciplines.

OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:30:03 PM WAT

Diagram showing integrity in research with elements such as honesty, accuracy, fairness, and credibility. *Caption: Figure 5.2 Definition of integrity in research*

5.2.2 Practices that promote integrity

Practices that promote integrity include proper citation of sources, transparent reporting of methods, accurate data collection, and respect for intellectual property. Researchers should also disclose conflicts of interest and ensure that peer review processes are followed. These practices safeguard the credibility of research and encourage responsible scholarship.

Fill in the blank: Proper citation of sources and transparent reporting of methods are practices that promote _____ in research.



Box 1.325: Promoting Research Integrity

Best Practices for Trustworthy Scholarship

1. Individual Practices:

- Honest Data Collection & Reporting
- Acknowledging Limitations & Biases
- Proper Citation & Attribution
- Mentorship & Training

2. Institutional Practices:

- Peer Review & Publication Ethics
- Institutional Review Boards (IRB)
- Clear Policies on Misconduct
- Data Sharing & Transparency Initiatives

Overall Impact:

This box summarizes practical tactics for fostering research integrity. By adopting these measures, researchers and institutions can uphold the highest standards of accuracy, and research responsibility, thereby increasing public trust and the reliability of academic findings.

OER Text Box

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:30:57 PM WAT

Caption: Box 5.2 Practices that promote integrity in research

5.2.3 Consequences of misconduct in social research

Misconduct in research refers to unethical behaviours such as falsifying data, plagiarising work, or misrepresenting findings. The consequences of misconduct include loss of credibility, damage to professional reputation, withdrawal of published work, and harm to participants or communities. Misconduct undermines trust in research and can have long-term negative effects on both the researcher and the discipline.

Fill in the blank: Misconduct in research refers to unethical behaviours such as _____ data or plagiarising work.



Box 1.326: Consequences of Misconduct in Social Research Ramifications of Unethical Practices

OER

Type Misconduct	Consequences
Fabrication/Falsification of Data	Loss of Credibility/Reputation, Retraction of Publications, Funding Bans, Legal Action
Plagiarism	Academic Sanctions, Job Loss Damage to Professioningent Suits
Academic Sanctions	Ethical Violations, Harm to Participants Copyright Infringement Suits
Lack of Informed Consent	Ethical Violations, Harm to, Lawsuits, Institutional Penalties
Breach Confidentiality	Privacy Violations, Legal Repudiations, Distress to Participants
Conflict of Interest	Biased Findings, Undermining Trust, Reputation Damage Professional Sanctions

This table Impact This table details the severe consequences of research in social sciences. Engaging in unethical practices not only damages the individual's career base public trust in science and undermines the validity of research findings, leading to far-reaching negative societal impacts

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:32:00 PM WAT

Caption: Table 5.2 Consequences of misconduct in social research

Pilot questions 5.2

1. What does integrity in research refer to?
2. Fill in the blank: Proper citation of sources and transparent reporting of methods are practices that promote _____ in research.
3. Give one practice that promotes integrity in research.
4. What does misconduct in research refer to?
5. Fill in the blank: Misconduct in research refers to unethical behaviours such as _____ data or plagiarising work.



5.3 Ensuring Objectivity in Social Research

5.3.1 Meaning of objectivity in research

Objectivity in research refers to the practice of conducting studies without personal bias, prejudice, or undue influence. It means that findings are based on evidence rather than the researcher's opinions or preferences. Objectivity ensures that research outcomes are credible, fair, and can be trusted by others.

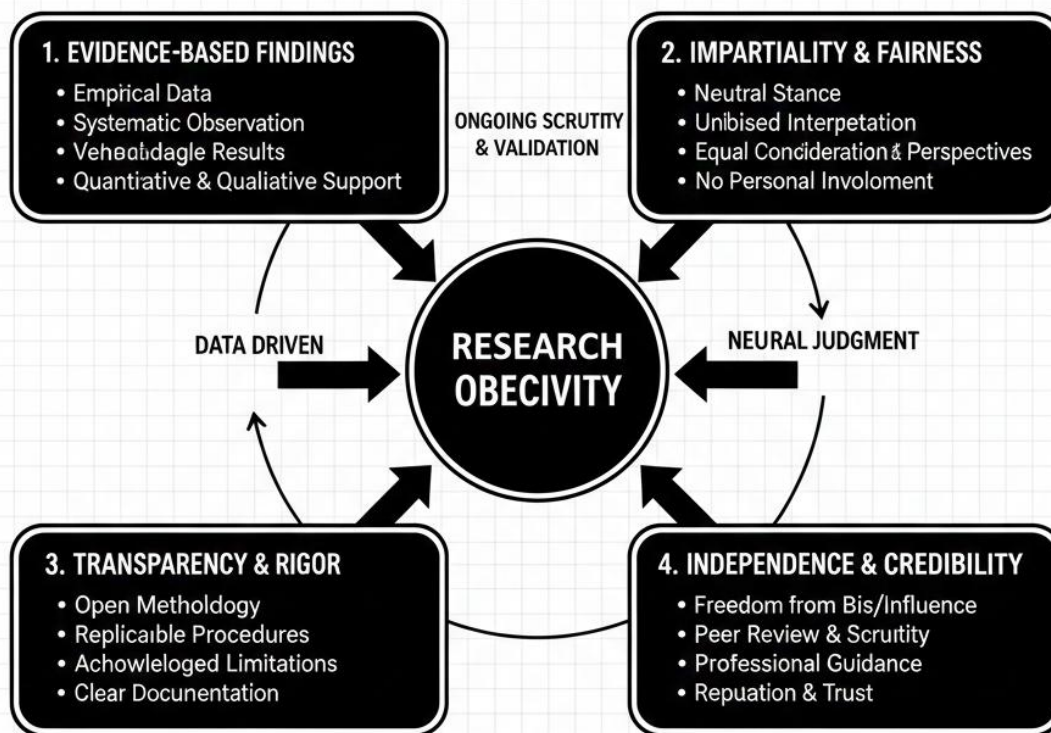
Fill in the blank: Objectivity in research refers to the practice of conducting studies without personal _____ or prejudice.



Box 1.327: Objectivity in Research

Striving for Unbiased & Impartial Scholarship

OER



Overall Impact: This diagram outlines the fundamental principles in social research, which ensure that research findings are unbiased, and unbiased findings are reliable, transparent, foster public validity and impact across their work, contributing to a credible body of knowledge.

OER Diagram

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:32:55 PM WAT

Diagram showing objectivity in research with elements such as evidence-based findings, fairness, and credibility. *Caption: Figure 5.3 Meaning of objectivity in research*

5.3.2 Threats to objectivity

Threats to objectivity occur when external or internal factors influence the research process. These include **researcher bias** (allowing personal views to shape findings), **conflicts of interest** (financial or personal gains affecting decisions), **selective reporting** (choosing only favourable results), and **pressure from sponsors or institutions**. Recognising these threats helps researchers take steps to minimise their impact.

Fill in the blank: One threat to objectivity is _____ reporting, where only favourable results are presented.



Box 1.328: Threats to Objectivity in Research

OER

Challenges to Impartial Scholarship

1. Internal Threats:

- Researcher Bias (Confirmation, Implicit)
- Personal Beliefs & Values
- Funding & Career Pressure
- Selective Reporting

2. External Threats:

- Social Desirability Bias (Participants)
- Political & Social Agendas
- Media Influence & Public Opinion
- Peer Pressure & Groupthink

Overall Impact: This box summarizes common threats that can compromise the objectivity of research. Recognizing and actively mitigating these challenges is essential for maintaining trust, reducing bias, and ensuring valid and reliable findings across all disciplines.

OER Text Box

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:34:00 PM WAT

Caption: Box 5.3 Threats to objectivity in social research

5.3.3 Strategies for maintaining objectivity

Strategies for maintaining objectivity include using **triangulation** (employing multiple methods or sources to confirm findings), ensuring **transparency** in data collection and analysis, applying **peer review** to validate results, and declaring **conflicts of interest** openly. These strategies help researchers maintain credibility and reduce the influence of bias or external pressures.

Fill in the blank: One strategy for maintaining objectivity is _____, which involves using multiple methods or sources to confirm findings.



Box 1.329: Strategies for Maintaining Objectivity in Research

Tactics for Unbiased & Impartial Scholarship

OER

Area	Strategies	Strategies & Techniques
1. Researcher Bias	Self-Reflection & Bias Checks	Self-Reflection & Bias Checks -Peer Review & Blind Review
2. Participant Bias		- Neutral Question Methods)
3. Data Collection &	Anonymity & Confidentiality Diverse Research Teams	-Neutral Question Framing
4. External Influences	Standardized Protocols Statistical Controls Independent Verification	Transparent Funding Disclosure Academic Freedom & Independence Public Engagement & Scrutiny

Overall Impact

This table outlines practical strategies for upholding objectivity in social research. By implementing these measures, researchers can minimize bias, enhance credibility and produce more reliable and impartial findings that contribute to trustworthy knowledge.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:34:36 PM WAT

Caption: Table 5.3 Strategies for maintaining objectivity in social research

Pilot questions 5.3

1. What does objectivity in research refer to?
2. Fill in the blank: One threat to objectivity is _____ reporting, where only favourable results are presented.
3. Give one example of a threat to objectivity in social research.
4. Provide one strategy for maintaining objectivity.
5. Fill in the blank: One strategy for maintaining objectivity is _____, which involves using multiple methods or sources to confirm findings.



5.4 Balancing Ethics, Integrity, and Objectivity

5.4.1 Integrating ethical principles into research design

Balancing ethics, integrity, and objectivity requires researchers to integrate ethical principles into the very design of their studies. This means considering participant protection, fairness, and transparency from the outset. Ethical integration ensures that research is not only methodologically sound but also socially responsible.

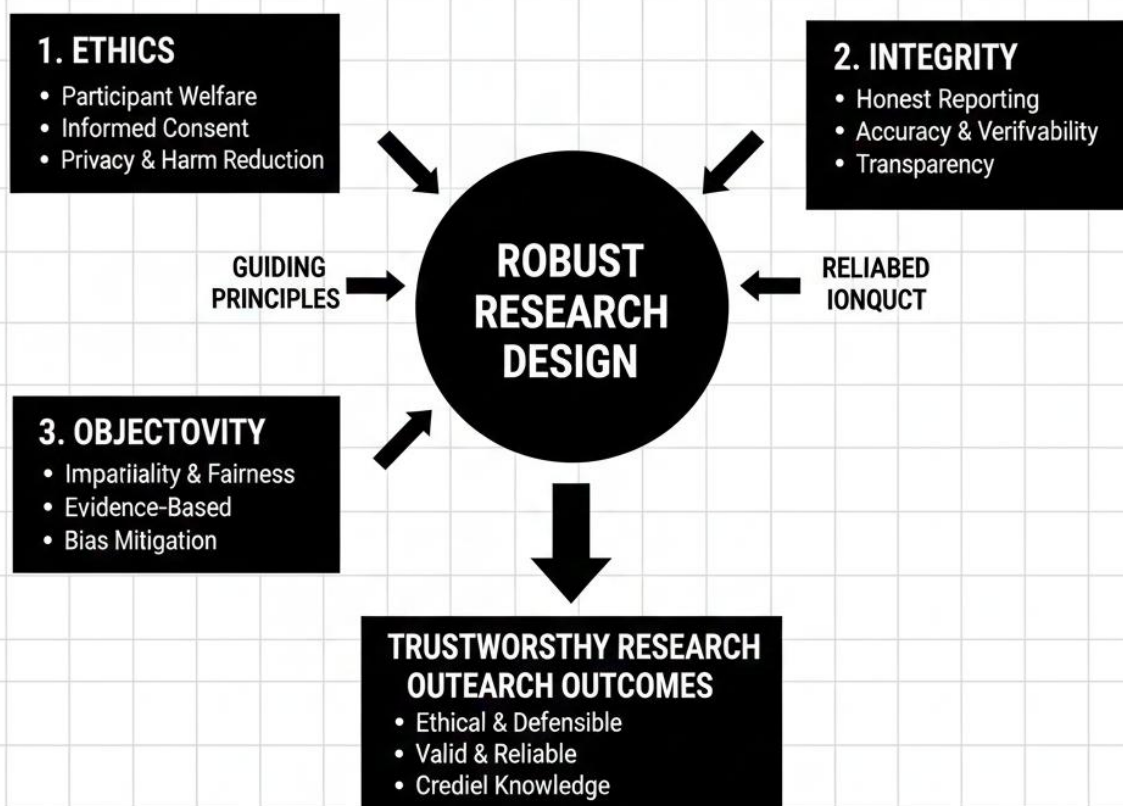
Fill in the blank: Integrating ethical principles into research design ensures that studies are both methodologically sound and _____ responsible.



Box 1.330: Integrated Research Principles

Syntisizing Ethics, Integrity, & Objectovity

OER



Overall Impact: This diagram illustrates the te hollistic integration of ethics, and objectivity into bo research design process. By embedts this embeded these core principles, researcheers can ensure studies are conocticted responsibly, produce reliable and unlissed findings, and contribute a credible boy of knowlege.

OER Diagram Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:33:16 P PM WAT

Diagram showing integration of ethics, integrity, and objectivity into research design. *Caption: Figure 5.4 Integrating ethics, integrity, and objectivity into research design*

5.4.2 Addressing dilemmas while maintaining integrity

In practice, researchers often face dilemmas such as balancing confidentiality with the need to share findings, or managing conflicts of interest. Maintaining **integrity** in these situations means being transparent, adhering to ethical guidelines, and prioritising fairness. Addressing dilemmas responsibly strengthens trust and ensures that research outcomes remain credible.

Fill in the blank: Addressing dilemmas responsibly strengthens _____ and ensures that research outcomes remain credible.



Box 1.331: Addressing Ethical Dilemmas & Maintaining Integrity

Strategies for Principled Social Research

OER

1. Navigating Dilemmas:

- Consult Ethical Guidelines
- Seek Peer & Expert Advice
- Prioritize Participant Welfare
- Transparent Decision-Making
- Document the Process

2. Upholding Integrity:

- Commit to Honesty & Accuracy
- Manage Conflicts of Interest
- Ensure Data Confidentiality
- Acknowledge Limitations
- Foster a Culture of Ethics

Overall Impact: This box provides actionable strategies for social researchers to navigate challenges while upholding research integrity. By proactively addressing dilemmas and committing as part of principled conduct, remain trustworthy, defensible, rigorous and contribute positively to knowledge.

OER Text Box

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:36:11 PM WAT

Caption: Box 5.4 Addressing dilemmas while maintaining integrity

5.4.3 Case illustrations of balanced ethical and objective research

Case illustrations demonstrate how ethics, integrity, and objectivity can be balanced in real-world research. For example, a health study may use experiments to test interventions but include safeguards to protect participants. A community project may combine surveys for generalisable data with interviews to capture lived experiences, ensuring both breadth and depth. These cases show that balanced approaches enhance credibility and relevance.

Fill in the blank: A community project may combine surveys for generalisable data with _____ to capture lived experiences.



Box 1.332: Case Illustrations of Balanced Ethical & Objective Research

OER

Applying Principles for Trustworthy Scholarship

Research Case Study	Balanced Approach (Ethics, Integrity, & Objectivity)
1. "Youth Mental Health in (Mixed-Methods)	Ethics: Informed consent, data privacy, privacy, minimize harm Integrity: Objectivity: Triangulation, bias checks, peer review
2. "Community Policing & Trust (Qualitative Focus)	Ethics: Community engagement, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity Integrity: Verbatim quotes, reflexivity, member checking Objectivity: Multiple perspectives, neutral facilitation
3. "Online Learning Efficacy (Quantitative Focus)	Ethics: Data anonymization, voluntary participation Integrity: Statistical rigor, open data, replication Objectivity: Randomized control trial, pre-registered hypothesis

Overall Impact: This table provides concrete examples of how researchers balance ethical constraints, maintain integrity, and ensure objectivity. By applying these integrated principles, studies produce more reliable, trustworthy, and socially responsible findings.

OER Table

Created: Monday, February 9, 2026 at 11:37:00 PM WAT

Caption: Table 5.4 Case illustrations of balanced ethical and objective research

Pilot questions 5.4

1. What does integrating ethical principles into research design mean?
2. Fill in the blank: Integrating ethical principles into research design ensures that studies are both methodologically sound and _____ responsible.
3. Give one strategy for addressing dilemmas while maintaining integrity.
4. Provide one example of a case illustration of balanced ethical and objective research.
5. Fill in the blank: A community project may combine surveys for generalisable data with _____ to capture lived experiences.



Series summary

This Series has highlighted the importance of ethics, integrity, and objectivity in social research, showing how these values underpin credible and responsible inquiry. We began by examining ethics, focusing on its meaning, guiding principles, and common issues. We then moved on to integrity, where we considered practices that promote honesty and fairness, as well as the consequences of misconduct. Following that, we explored objectivity, identifying threats such as bias and selective reporting, and strategies to maintain fairness and credibility. Finally, we discussed how ethics, integrity, and objectivity can be balanced within research design, supported by case illustrations.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define ethics, integrity, and objectivity, explain their principles, identify issues and threats, demonstrate strategies for maintaining credibility, and analyse case studies of balanced research practice. In doing so, you have achieved the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs 5.1 to 5.12), equipping you with the ability to conduct social research that is ethically sound, responsibly managed, and objectively presented.

Glossary of terms

- **Beneficence:** The ethical principle that requires researchers to maximise benefits and minimise harm to participants.
- **Conflict of interest:** A situation where personal or financial interests may influence a researcher's decisions or objectivity.
- **Ethics:** The principles and standards that guide researchers in conducting studies responsibly, ensuring protection of participants and honest reporting of findings.
- **Integrity:** The commitment to honesty, accuracy, and fairness in all aspects of the research process, avoiding misconduct such as falsification or plagiarism.
- **Justice:** The ethical principle that ensures fairness in participation and outcomes of research, so that no group is unfairly burdened or excluded.
- **Misconduct:** Unethical behaviours in research such as falsifying data, plagiarising work, or misrepresenting findings.
- **Objectivity:** The practice of conducting research without personal bias or prejudice, ensuring findings are based on evidence rather than opinion.
- **Respect for persons:** The ethical principle of recognising autonomy and protecting vulnerable groups in research.
- **Selective reporting:** Presenting only favourable results while ignoring or omitting unfavourable findings, which threatens objectivity.



- **Triangulation:** A strategy for maintaining objectivity by using multiple methods or sources to confirm findings and reduce bias.

Concept check questions [Series 5]

Objective questions

1. Ethics in research refers to the _____ and standards that guide researchers in conducting studies responsibly. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. The principle of _____ requires researchers to maximise benefits and minimise harm. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
3. Integrity in research refers to the commitment to _____, accuracy, and fairness in all aspects of the research process. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
4. Which practice promotes integrity in research by ensuring proper acknowledgement of sources? (Linked to SLO 5.5)
5. Objectivity in research refers to conducting studies without personal _____ or prejudice. (Linked to SLO 5.7)

Short-answer questions

6. State one example of an ethical issue in social research. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
7. Give one consequence of misconduct in social research. (Linked to SLO 5.6)
8. Identify one threat to objectivity in social research. (Linked to SLO 5.8)
9. Provide one strategy for maintaining objectivity in social research. (Linked to SLO 5.9)
10. Explain one way ethical principles can be integrated into research design. (Linked to SLO 5.10)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the principles of ethical research practice and explain their importance for protecting participants. (Linked to SLOs 5.1, 5.2, 5.3)
12. Evaluate the consequences of misconduct in social research, using examples to illustrate its impact on credibility. (Linked to SLOs 5.4, 5.5, 5.6)
13. Discuss threats to objectivity in social research and suggest strategies for reducing their influence. (Linked to SLOs 5.7, 5.8, 5.9)
14. Explain how dilemmas can be addressed while maintaining integrity, with reference to transparency and fairness. (Linked to SLOs 5.10, 5.11)
15. Demonstrate with case illustrations how ethics, integrity, and objectivity can be balanced in social research. (Linked to SLO 5.12)

Answers to concept check questions [Series 5]



Objective questions

1. Principles.
2. Beneficence.
3. Honesty.
4. Proper citation.
5. Bias.

Short-answer questions

6. Lack of informed consent.
7. Loss of credibility or withdrawal of published work.
8. Selective reporting.
9. Triangulation.
10. By considering participant protection and fairness from the outset.

Long-answer questions

11. **Basic response:** Ethical principles such as respect for persons, beneficence, justice, and honesty protect participants and ensure fairness. **Value-added response:** These principles also strengthen trust in research, ensuring that vulnerable groups are safeguarded and findings are credible enough to inform policy and practice.
12. **Basic response:** Misconduct such as falsification or plagiarism damages credibility and reputation. **Value-added response:** It can also harm participants, distort knowledge, and undermine the discipline, leading to long-term consequences such as reduced funding or public trust.
13. **Basic response:** Threats include researcher bias, conflicts of interest, and selective reporting. Strategies such as triangulation and peer review reduce their influence. **Value-added response:** Declaring conflicts of interest and ensuring transparency in reporting further strengthen objectivity, making findings more reliable and widely accepted.
14. **Basic response:** Dilemmas can be addressed by being transparent, adhering to ethical guidelines, and prioritising fairness. **Value-added response:** For example, balancing confidentiality with the need to share findings requires clear communication with participants and adherence to agreed protocols.
15. **Basic response:** Case illustrations include combining surveys and interviews in community projects to balance breadth and depth. **Value-added response:** Health interventions may use experiments for cause-and-effect testing but include safeguards to protect participants, demonstrating how ethics, integrity, and objectivity can be balanced in practice.

Answers to pilot questions [Series 5]



Pilot questions 5.1

1. Ethics in research refers to the principles and standards that guide researchers in conducting studies responsibly.
2. Beneficence.
3. Respect for persons, beneficence, justice, or honesty.
4. Lack of informed consent.
5. Informed consent.

Pilot questions 5.2

1. Integrity in research refers to the commitment to honesty, accuracy, and fairness in all aspects of the research process.
2. Integrity.
3. Proper citation of sources, transparent reporting of methods, accurate data collection, respect for intellectual property, disclosure of conflicts of interest, or adherence to peer review.
4. Misconduct in research refers to unethical behaviours such as falsifying data, plagiarising work, or misrepresenting findings.
5. Falsifying.

Pilot questions 5.3

1. Objectivity in research refers to the practice of conducting studies without personal bias or prejudice.
2. Selective.
3. Researcher bias, conflicts of interest, selective reporting, or pressure from sponsors.
4. Triangulation, transparency, peer review, or declaring conflicts of interest.
5. Triangulation.

Pilot questions 5.4

1. Integrating ethical principles into research design means considering participant protection, fairness, and transparency from the outset.
2. Socially.
3. Transparency in decision-making, adherence to ethical guidelines, prioritising fairness, or managing conflicts of interest openly.
4. A health intervention using experiments with safeguards, or a community project combining surveys and interviews.
5. Interviews.



References and attributions [Series 5]

Course content references

- SOC 301: Methods for Social Research (course document provided).
- Definitions and explanations of ethics, integrity, and objectivity were adapted directly from the Series outline and instructional content.

