

Approaches to Research

There are a number of ways to approach research:

1. Quantitative or Qualitative (important areas of distinction in research)
2. Applied or Basic
3. Deductive or Inductive

Quantitative	Qualitative
As the name suggests, the emphasis is on collecting and analysing data, quite often numerical in nature. There is a focus on measurement: of scale, range, frequency etc.	This is more subjective in nature and focuses on less tangible aspects of a study, such as values, attitudes, perceptions etc.
Quantitative research is often more difficult to design. It involves great attention to detail, is highly structured and results can be collated and presented statistically.	Qualitative research is sometimes easier to design. However, there are greater challenges involved in interpreting and presenting the findings, which are generally easier to challenge.

Basic Research	Applied Research
This is carried out with the aim of improving knowledge in general terms.	From the start, there is an intention to apply any findings to a particular situation.

Deductive	Inductive
Where you begin with a particular theory and then test it. The particular is deduced from the general General theory  Particular situation	Where you have data and work towards a theory. The question you would ask is 'why?' Particular data/situation  Theory

An Example

You want to discover what the term 'mental health' means to a range of people.

If you used a **deductive** approach, you would:

- Thoroughly research the subject
- Gain a number of different definitions from varying sources, including perhaps medical and charitable mental health organisations
- Have established a clear theoretical position first.

You would then test the data by:

- Using a questionnaire designed to measure quantitative information
- Carrying out structured interviews

You might want to select a sample of people based on specific criteria which might include age, gender, occupation. Data you collect would then be collated, analysed and presented accordingly.

If you used an **inductive** approach you might:

- Begin by talking to a range of people
- You might ask them for their definitions of the term.

The techniques you might use include:

- Semi-structured or unstructured interviews
- Using a questionnaire designed to measure qualitative information

From these discussions, you would start to assemble any commonalities, and perhaps compare these to definitions used by medical and charitable mental health organisations. Data would be collated, analysed and presented accordingly.

Mixed Method Approaches

Many research projects are designed using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

A city-based transport company designed a research project to test the success of an intervention on workplace health.

Absences were measured using numerical data, together with self-referencing questionnaires. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were also employed to explore further benefits which may have been unknown.