

Chapter 6

Answers to Study Questions

6.1. What is a method of data collection?

It's a technique for physically obtaining the data to be analyzed in an empirical research study.

6.2. What are the six main methods of data collection? (Hint: the first letters make the rather awkward acronym, SQIFOS)

- Tests
- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Observation
- Secondary or existing data.

6.3. What principles should you follow when constructing a questionnaire?

Here is Table 6.2 which lists the 15 principles of questionnaire construction.

■ **TABLE 6.2** Principles of Questionnaire Construction

Principle 1	Make sure the questionnaire items match your research objectives.
Principle 2	Understand your research participants.
Principle 3	Use natural and familiar language.
Principle 4	Write items that are clear, precise, and relatively short.
Principle 5	Do not use “leading” or “loaded” questions.
Principle 6	Avoid double-barreled questions.
Principle 7	Avoid double negatives.
Principle 8	Determine whether an open-ended or a closed-ended question is needed.
Principle 9	Use mutually exclusive and exhaustive response categories for closed-ended questions.
Principle 10	Consider the different types of response categories available for closed-ended questionnaire items.
Principle 11	Use multiple items to measure abstract constructs.
Principle 12	Consider using multiple methods when measuring abstract constructs.
Principle 13	Use caution if you reverse the wording in some of the items to prevent response sets in multi-item scales.
Principle 14	Develop a questionnaire that is easy for the participant to use.
Principle 15	Always pilot test your questionnaire.

4. What is an example of a leading or loaded question?

Leading question: Don't you think that Congress people earn too much money?

Loaded: Do you support the liberal policy of increasing spending on education?

5. What is an item stem?

It is the set of words forming a question or statement. It excludes the response categories if any are provided.

6. If you are conducting an exploratory research study, are you more likely to use closed-ended questions or open-ended questions?

Open-ended. This allows participants to say anything they want, in their own words, in response to your question.

7. How many points should a rating scale have?

Research suggests that anywhere from 4 to 11 points works well. Four and five point rating scales are very popular.

8. When should you use a contingency question?

When you only want specific kinds of people answering the follow-up questions(s). You use a contingency question (also called a filter question) to guide different kinds of people through different routes through your questionnaire as needed.

9. Explain how to pilot test a questionnaire or an interview protocol.

You may use the think-aloud technique with some people. Also, make sure that you pilot test it with similar people to your target population under similar circumstances.

6.10. What is the difference between a quantitative and a qualitative interview?

Quantitative interviews are more structured and standardized. Qualitative interviews are more open-ended and free flowing.

6.11. Why would a researcher want to conduct a focus group?

Here are seven reasons:

1. To obtain general background information about a topic of interest.
2. To generate research hypotheses that can be submitted to further research and testing using more quantitative approaches.
3. to stimulate new ideas and creative concepts.
4. To diagnose the potential for problems with a new program, service, or product.
5. To generate impressions of products, programs, services, institutions, or other objects of interest.
6. To learn how respondents talk about the phenomenon of interest (which may, in turn, facilitate the design of questionnaires, survey instruments, or other research tools that might be employed in more quantitative research).
7. To interpret previously obtained quantitative results.

12. What are the main differences between quantitative and qualitative observations?

Quantitative observations are more structured, standardized, and based on already developed scoring or categorization systems; qualitative observations are more open-ended and based on the inductive approach.

13. What are the four main roles that a researcher can take during qualitative observation?

Here they are:

1. Complete participant (the researcher becomes a member of the group being studied and does not tell the members that they are being studied).
2. Participant-as-observer (the researcher spends extended time with the group as an insider and tells the members they are being studied).
3. Observer-as-participant (the researcher spends a limited amount of time observing group members and tells members that they are being studied).

4. Complete observer (the researcher observes as an outsider and does not tell the people they are being observed).

14. What is the difference between frontstage and backstage behavior?

Frontstage behavior is what people allow or want us to see; backstage behavior is what people say and do only with their closest friends or when “acting” is at a minimum.

15. What are some examples of secondary or existing data?

Note that we use secondary data and existing sources essentially as synonyms; here is the definition of secondary data: existing data originally collected or left behind at an earlier time by a different person for a different purpose.

Here are the primary types discussed in your chapter (see chapter for definitions):

- Personal documents (e.g., letters, diaries, family videos)
- Official documents (newspapers, journals and magazines, annual reports, student work, personnel files),
- Physical data (worn tiles on the floor, wear on books, soil from shoes and clothing, contents of peoples’ trash)
- Archived data (census tapes, ICPSR data files).