

Research methods, research techniques, and research methodology

It is important to clarify and explain that there is a difference between the following concepts: research methods, research techniques, and research methodology.

Research methods may be understood as the strategies employed by a researcher(s) to answer the research question(s). These strategies can include analysis of historical records, participant observation, surveys, and questionnaires, etc.

At times, a distinction is also made between research methods and research techniques.

Research techniques refer to the behaviour (e.g. note taking) and instruments (e.g. measurement scales) we use in performing research methods.

The difference between methods and techniques of data collection can better be understood by looking at this chart:

| Type | Methods | Techniques |
|------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Library Research | (i) Analysis of historical records (ii) Analysis of documents | Recording of notes, Content analysis, Tape and Film listening and analysis. Statistical compilations and manipulations, reference and abstract guides, contents analysis. |
| 2. Field Research | (i) Non-participant direct observation (ii) Participant observation (iii) Mass observation (iv) Mail questionnaire (v) Opinionnaire (vi) Personal interview (vii) Focused interview (viii) Group interview (ix) Telephone survey (x) Case study and life history | Observational behavioural scales, use of score cards, etc. Interactive recording, possible use of tape recorders, photo graphic techniques. Recording mass behaviour, interview using independent observers in public places. Identification of social and economic background of respondents. Use of attitude scales, projective techniques, use of sociometric scales. Interviewer uses a detailed schedule with open and closed questions. Interviewer focuses attention upon a given experience and its effects. Small groups of respondents are interviewed simultaneously. Used as a survey technique for information and for discerning opinion; may also be used as a follow up of questionnaire. Cross sectional collection of data for intensive analysis, longitudinal collection of data of intensive character. |
| 3. Laboratory Research | Small group study of random behaviour, play and role analysis | Use of audio-visual recording devices, use of observers, etc. |

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Research methodology is defined as “the science of systematically answering a research question” (PEDIAA, 2015). It refers to the entire research process. In other words it refers to the type of research approach (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods) to be employed, as well as the methods (e.g. interviews, observation, case study, etc.) and techniques (e.g. audio recordings, note taking, use of measurement scales, etc.) that will be utilized to answer the research question(s). Think of the research methodology as a large umbrella. Underneath this umbrella are the specific details of how the research will be conducted.

PEDIAA. (2015). Difference between research methods and research methodology. Retrieved from <http://pediaa.com/difference-between-research-methods-and-research-methodology/>