

Qualitative Data: Definition

Qualitative data is defined as the data that approximates and characterizes.

Qualitative data can be observed and recorded. This data type is non-numerical in nature. This type of data is collected through methods of observations, one-to-one interview, conducting [focus groups](#) and similar methods. Qualitative data in statistics is also known as categorical data. Data that can be arranged categorically based on the attributes and properties of a thing or a phenomenon.

Qualitative Data Examples

Qualitative data is also called categorical data since this data can be grouped according to categories.

For example, think of a student reading a paragraph from a book during one of the class sessions. A teacher who is listening to the reading gives a feedback on how the child read that paragraph. If the teacher gives a feedback based on fluency, intonation, throw of words, clarity in pronunciation without giving a grade to the child, this is considered as an example of qualitative data.

It's pretty easy to understand the difference between qualitative and quantitative data, qualitative data does not include numbers in its definition of traits whereas quantitative data is all about numbers.

- The cake is orange, blue and black in color (qualitative).
- Females have brown, black, blonde, and red hair (qualitative).

Quantitative data is any quantifiable information that can be used for mathematical calculation or statistical analysis. This form of data helps in making real-life decisions based on mathematical derivations. Quantitative data is used to answer questions like how many? how often? how much? This data can be validated and verified.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Analyzing your data is vital, as you have spent time and money collecting it in the first place. This is an essential process because you don't want to find yourself in the dark even after putting in so many efforts. However, there are

no set ground rules for analyzing qualitative data, it all begins with understanding the two main approaches to qualitative data.

Two Main Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis

1. Deductive Approach

The deductive approach involves analyzing qualitative data based on a structure that is predetermined by the researcher. In this case, a researcher can use the questions as a guide for analyzing the data. This approach is quick and easy and can be used when a researcher has a fair idea about the likely responses that he/she is going to receive from the [sample](#) population.

2. Inductive Approach

The inductive approach, on the contrary, is not based on a predetermined structure or set ground rules/framework. This is more time consuming and a thorough approach to qualitative data analysis. Inductive approach is often used when a researcher has very little or no idea of the [research](#) phenomenon.

5 Steps to Qualitative Data Analysis

Whether you are looking to analyze qualitative data collected through a one-to-one interview or qualitative data from a [survey](#), these simple steps will ensure a robust data analysis.

Step 1: Arrange your Data

Once you have collected all the data, it is largely unstructured and sometimes makes no sense when looked at a glance. It is, therefore, essential that as a researcher you need to first transcribe the data collected. The first step in analyzing your data is arranging your data systematically. Arranging data simply means converting all the data into a text format. You can either export the data into a spreadsheet or manually type in the data or choose from any of the computers assisted qualitative data analysis tools.

Step 2: Organize all your Data

After transforming and arranging your data, the immediate next step is to organize your data. There are chances you most likely have a large amount of information that still needs to be arranged in an orderly manner. One great

way to organize the data is going back to your research objectives and then organizing the data based on the questions asked. Arrange your research objective in a table so it appears visually clear. At all costs, avoid temptations of working with unorganized data. You will end up wasting time and there will be no conclusive results obtained.

Step 3: Set a Code to the Data Collected

Setting up proper codes for the collected data takes you a step ahead. Coding is one of the best ways to compress a huge amount of information collected. Coding of qualitative data simply means categorizing and assigning properties and patterns to the collected data. Coding is an important step in qualitative data analysis as you can derive theories from relevant [research](#) findings. After assigning codes to your data, you can then begin to build on the patterns to gain in-depth insight into the data that will help make informed decisions.

Step 4: Validate your Data

Validating data is one of the important steps of qualitative data analysis for successful research. Since data is quintessential for research, it is extremely important to ensure that the data is not flawed. Please note that data validation is not just one step in qualitative data analysis, this is a recurring step, that needs to be followed throughout the research process. There are two sides to validating data:

1. Accuracy of your research design or methods.
2. Reliability, which is the extent to which the methods produce accurate data consistently.

Step 5: Concluding the Analysis Process

It is important to finally conclude your data, which means, presenting your data in a systematic manner, a report, that can be readily used. The report should state the method that you as a researcher used to conduct the research studies, the positives, and negatives and study limitations. In the report, you should also state the suggestions/inferences of your findings and any related area for future research.