

Section C

Research methods

Answer all questions in this section

1.1 A researcher wanted to investigate the types of play parents engaged in with their children.

Ten children and one parent of each child took part in the study. The researcher asked each parent to keep a diary for a month about the types of play their child engaged in.

Is the diary primary or secondary data? Justify your answer. [2 marks]

Ans. This is primary data. The researcher asked the parents to maintain a diary so that they could investigate the types of play they engaged in with their children.

1.2 Explain how the researcher could have used content analysis to analyse the parents' diaries. [4 marks]

Ans. The researcher will first identify key themes in the diary data e.g. types of play engaged in by parents with children such as 'pretend play,' 'educational play,' etc. Then, the researcher will code the data systematically by connecting examples of data to key themes e.g. an entry like, "I was acting as a patient and my daughter acted as if she were my doctor," would be categorised as 'pretend play,' etc. Next, the researcher would tally count the number of instances falling under each theme e.g. it may be found that 'pretend play' is the most recurring theme. Finally, qualitative insights could be provided into the data by giving some examples of e.g. how parents and children communicate during their interactive play, etc.

1.3 The researcher was concerned about the reliability of the content analysis.

How might the researcher have assessed the reliability of the content analysis in this study? [4 marks]

Ans. The researchers will first prepare a standardised coding system e.g. any instance of play suggesting the parent and child enacting different roles would be categorised as 'role play'. Next two researchers will independently code the same diary data using this coding system. Next, they will cross-validate their coding against each other's to check for similarities of frequencies noted for each type of play. Finally, they will calculate a correlation coefficient for the frequencies obtained by each researcher and if it turns out to be +0.80 or greater, it will be considered that the analysis has high inter-rater reliability.

1.4 The researcher decided to interview some of the parents about their child's play. Explain why the data collected from the interview might have improved upon the data collected from the diaries. [3 marks]

Ans. An interview will enable researchers to gather more depth about types of play by asking follow-up questions to get more context which would not be possible with diary extracts. Secondly, if there is ambiguity in being able to classify any instance of play into a particular category, it can be resolved by probing further during the interview, again probing is not possible with an already recorded diary. Finally, interviews can encourage parents to provide more details about how they play with their children due to real-time interaction with the interviewer which would not be available in one-sided communication with a diary.

1.5 In the interview the researcher collected some qualitative data.

Write one question that could be used in the researcher's interview that would produce qualitative data. [2 marks]

Ans. "Can you describe a particular moment during playtime with your child that stand out to you and please explain why it is meaningful?"

1.6 Identify one limitation of qualitative data [1]

Ans. One limitation is possible subjectivity in interpretation.

The researcher noticed age-related differences in the types of play mentioned in the diary entries. They designed an experiment to investigate the differences in play choices between 2-year-old and 4-year-old children,.

The researcher carried out the study using children from two local nursery schools. There were 30 children of each age group at nursery A. There were 20 children of each age group at nursery B. All parents gave informed consent for their children to take part in the study. The researcher used stratified sampling of the nurseries. Ten 2-year-olds and ten 4-year-olds took part in the study,

Each child was observed for 15 minutes during playtime in an area of the nursery where they could choose to play with building blocks, a sandpit and a slide. The researcher recorded how long each child spent playing with each activity.

1.7 Explain how the researcher could have obtained informed consent from the parents for this study [4 marks]

Ans. The researchers would first provide a detailed consent form to the parents including purpose of the study, that is differences in play choices between age groups, what participation involves such as 15-minute of observation of child's playtime in the nursery, etc. Then, they would ensure that the parents understand the information by asking them a few questions. Parents will be required to sign the form on paper - the nurseries will mail the papers to them and submit their returns to the researchers. Finally, it will be reiterated to the parents by the nursery staff that they can withdraw their child at any time even after giving consent.

1.8 Identify the type of experiment used in this study. Justify your answer. [3 marks]

Ans. It is a quasi-experiment. Pre-existing groups of 2-year old and 4-year old children are compared, without any manipulation of the independent variable of age. Randomisation is also not possible, given that these age groups are fixed.

Lesson prepared by:

Jyotika Varmani

CIE A Levels Psychology School Teacher, Modern College, Mauritius

CIE A Levels Psychology Subject Expert, Podar International, Mumbai

AQA A Levels Psychology Tutor, Higher OTS Academy, UAE

AQA A Levels Psychology Tutor, Gritty Tech, India

AQA A Levels Psychology Tutor, Aurora ELearning, UAE

Edexcel Psychology Tutor, ETutor Home, India

Youtuber with 4k+ Global Psychology Student and Teacher Subscribers

Psychology Website Author with 10M+ Global Views

9+ Years Experience in International GCSE and A-Levels Psychology Tutoring for CIE,

AQA, Edexcel and IBDP

M.A. (Psychology Honours), UGC-SET and NET (first attempt, first ranker),

PGDHE (Post-Graduate Diploma in Higher Education)

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