8 TIPS FOR QUANTITATIVE INQUIRY

The following are 8 tips to guide you through a quantitative inquiry from beginning to end. Documents throughout the toolkit will be able to assist with any particular steps that you may want further information about.

1. Identify your research need or problem and give yourself time to prepare. It is important to give yourself proper time when preparing for quantitative research. You will need to determine your purpose and keep a clear focus throughout your research. The overriding purpose of quantitative research is to understand differences, so keep this in mind while structuring your inquiry.

2. Identify the variables you will use. It is important to determine what your variables will be. These can include dependent, independent, extraneous, moderator, and/or mediator variables. A clear focus on your variables throughout your study will help to keep your focus and purpose top of mind.

3. Decide on and refine a concise research question(s) that you want to study. A good research question needs to be clear, specific, and achievable. Your question should explore difference between groups, change over time, relationships between two or more variables, and/or descriptions of populations and phenomena.

4. Consult the existing research. Reviewing recent literature – from research to blogs, can help you find out what others have found about your question. Doing this may help you to focus your question more specifically. It will also help you to become better informed about topic you are choosing and help you to determine if there is even a need for your question to be answered.

5. Choose an approach and create a research plan. Determine which approach will best suit your research needs and context. Be sure to provide credible evidence to your audiences about your choice. Create a step-by-step research plan to guide you through your study. Seek support from those trained in specific quantitative approaches to assist you (e.g., statistician).

6. Collect your data. Consider aspects of voice, access and representation when you are collecting your data. Whose perspectives are you including/excluding? Identify participants for your research; make sure you can explain your sample selection and processes transparently.

7. Analyse your data. Use statistical methodology to code, organize, and analyse your data. Seek support from a statistician to support you through this process. There is statistical software that can be used to assist with analysis, with the support of someone trained in its use.

8. Reporting and presenting your findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Go beyond just reporting – delivering a report does not satisfy all communication requirements. How can you connect with the participants from the study, stakeholders, and audiences? Consider how data visualization can improve your presentation of findings. Engage others in a discussion about the inquiry process or findings. Use your report to tell a story. Find ways to collapse and consolidate ideas (e.g., use tables, charts, images, text boxes, and graphics). Focus on lessons learned, implications, considerations, conclusions, and/or recommendations. Present a draft report to trusted users for feedback.

Created in collaboration by the London Region MISA PNC BIPSA Sub-committee and Ann McKerlie, Project Consultant (ann.mckerlie@gmail.com)