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DATA COLLECTION

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Empirical social research is an essential component of social sciences, focusing on the collection and analysis of data to delve into human behavior, societal dynamics, and social structures. Its core objective is to produce knowledge grounded in observable and measurable evidence, thus enhancing our understanding of the causes, and consequences of human behaviors and social frameworks.

Empirical social research can be divided into two main methodologies: quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative methods in empirical social research involve the collection of numerical data and the application of statistical analysis to investigate relationships between variables. These methods follow a structured and systematic approach, often utilising a deductive process. Researchers start with a theory or hypothesis and then gather data to test and confirm it. Common quantitative methods include surveys, longitudinal studies, and polls, which are used to quantify opinions, behaviours, or defined variables across large samples. These methods allow researchers to identify patterns and correlations, which can lead to conclusions that are applicable to broader populations. By relying on large sample sizes and standardised data collection techniques, quantitative methods aim to enhance the reliability and validity of research findings. In contrast qualitative research focuses on non-numerical data and is primarily inductive, meaning that theories emerge from the data collected. This approach employs techniques such as focus groups, interviews, observations, and case studies to uncover the meanings, opinions, and reasons behind human behavior.

Various interview techniques are used within qualitative research, including structured interviews with fixed questions, unstructured interviews allowing for a more flexible, conversational approach, and semi-structured interviews that blend these two methods. Interviews can also feature open-ended questions, which encourage detailed, personalised responses, or closed-ended questions with set response options. In the context of SAFE, interviews are typically conducted using a semi-structured style. This approach involves asking mostly open-ended questions, allowing for variation in wording and order to facilitate a more natural and adaptive conversation.

Observation methods examine social behaviors in real-world contexts, providing authentic insights into interactions and contributing to a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena when combined with other empirical methods.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, known as mixed-methods research, facilitates a holistic exploration of research questions. This approach leverages the strengths of both methodologies, providing comprehensive and multidimensional insights that are not attainable through a singular method. In conclusion, empirical social research is

indispensable for deciphering the intricate layers of human behavior and societal structures, ultimately contributing to more informed theories, policies, and practices.