

Knowledge organiser

AQA A Level Sociology 7192 • Families & Households • L006 • v1.0

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How do sociologists investigate families?

Concept	Meaning
Primary data	Evidence collected first-hand for the current investigation.
Secondary data	Existing evidence used for a further investigation.
Quantitative data	Evidence expressed numerically, such as hours of care.
Qualitative data	Evidence about meanings and experiences, often in words.
Operational definition	A stated rule for deciding what a concept means in a study.
Validity	How well the evidence captures what the study intends to investigate.
Reliability	Consistency when a procedure is repeated under comparable conditions.
Representativeness	How adequately a sample reflects the relevant population.

Quality and ethical choices

Concept	Meaning
Population	The group about which the researcher wants to make claims.
Sample	The cases selected from or within a population for study.
Sampling bias	Systematic over- or under-inclusion of relevant kinds of case.
Social desirability	Giving an answer that presents oneself in a favourable light.
Informed consent	Voluntary agreement based on understandable information about participation.
Confidentiality	Managing information so that unauthorised people cannot access it.
Anonymity	A condition in which a person's identity is not known or identifiable.
Triangulation	Combining approaches or sources to examine a question from more than one angle.

Worked explanation

Proposal A could compare reported hours of care, but a parents' forum does not reach every adult in the town. Increasing the number of volunteers does not remove that selection problem. Clarify the intended population and consider recruitment beyond the forum.

Avoid these confusions

Reliable does not mean valid. A large sample is not automatically representative. Quantitative does not mean unbiased. Qualitative does not guarantee truth. Confidentiality is not the same as anonymity. Consent is not a one-off licence to ask anything.

Retrieve later

Tomorrow: distinguish validity from reliability. In one week: explain why a large volunteer sample can be biased and give one consent safeguard.