The Methodology Chapter

Methodological Questions of Chinese Economic Research

Benedikt Lasar

02.07.2025

Agenda

(1) Structure and Function of Chapters

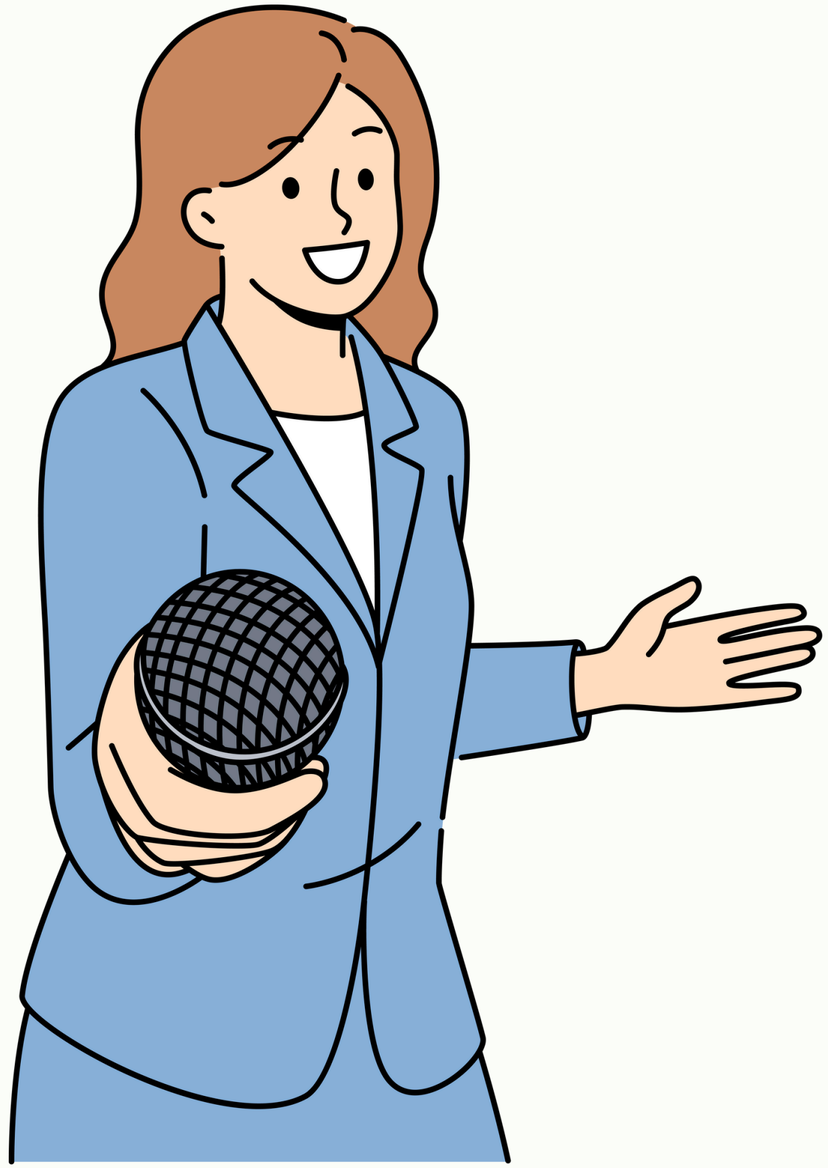
(2) Methodology for Qualitative Research

(3) Methodology for Quantitative Research

Question

What does a
methodology chapter do?

Why do we need it?



Your methodology chapter...

... explains your research strategy (qualitative or quantitative) and design

... provides details on the data collection and analysis process

... gives readers a chance to judge whether your chosen methods suit the research question

... offers the author to justify the decisions taken

... evaluates the role of the researcher

... honestly assesses the limitations of the research

Structure and Function of Chapters

1. **Introduction**
2. Theory
3. Methodology
4. Findings
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

1. **Introduction**
2. Theory
3. Methodology
4. Findings
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

- Provide background information on your topic
- Lead your readers toward the research question(s)
- State your **research question(s)**
- State your research objectives
- Explain the structure of your seminar paper or thesis

1. Introduction
2. **Theory**
3. Methodology
4. Findings
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

1. Introduction
2. **Theory**
3. Methodology
4. Findings
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

Literature reviews focus on authors and different strands of research

Theory chapters focus on concepts and models

Use names, not labels

1. Introduction
2. Theory
3. **Methodology**
4. Findings
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

The methods chapter should contain the following subchapters:

3.1. Research Design
3.2. Data Collection and Analysis
3.3. Limitations

1. Introduction
2. Theory
3. Methodology
4. **Findings**
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

1. Introduction
2. Theory
3. Methodology
4. **Findings**
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

Your findings are what readers are most interested in

Follow a logical structure to present your unique findings

Provide evidence to convince readers of your claims

1. Introduction
2. Theory
3. Methodology
4. **Findings**
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

Unless you are writing a literature review, keep your primary data (survey, interview, statistical analysis) separate from secondary data (literature, theory)

1. Introduction
2. Theory
3. Methodology
4. Findings
5. **Discussion**
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

1. Introduction
2. Theory
3. Methodology
4. Findings
5. **Discussion**
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

Bring your theory and findings together

Compare your primary data (findings) and secondary data (theory)

Find commonalities and differnces

1. Introduction
2. Theory
3. Methodology
4. Findings
5. **Discussion**
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

Possible structure:

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

5.2. Practical Recommendations

1. Introduction
2. Theory
3. Methodology
4. Findings
5. Discussion
6. **Conclusion**
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

1. Introduction
2. Theory
3. Methodology
4. Findings
5. Discussion
6. **Conclusion**
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices

The **only** chapter with no references, as you are not supposed to provide new information

Do not summarize

Restate the **research question(s)**, provide answers, and call for futur research

Task

Read “Examples: Writing up qualitative/quantitative research” on WueCampus

Mark research strategies, design, and elements describes in both methods

Task

Answer the following questions:

How are the two methods sections similar?

How are the two methods sections different?

Methodology Chapter for Qualitative Research

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design
3.2. Data Collection
3.3. Data Analysis
3.4. Limitations

Explain…

… the philosophical approach and underlying research rationale

… the research strategy with a focus on your chosen approach, not on other strategies

… why your chosen methods are suitable to answer your research question(s)

Reference secondary literature on your chosen methodology

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design
3.2. Data Collection
3.3. Data Analysis
3.4. Limitations

Explain…

… the criteria for selecting data (interview partners, policy documents, …) and context in which your research was conducted (on- or offline, time frame, location, …)

… your data collection method (interview type)

… the evolution of your data corpus

… your role in collecting data

Reference secondary literature on your chosen methodology

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

3.2. Data Collection

3.3. Data Analysis

3.4. Limitations

Explain…

… the type of analysis you perform (content, discourse, thematic, network)

… the tools you used to analyse your collected data (software, …)

Do not present results here!

Reference secondary literature on your chosen methodology

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design
3.2. Data Collection
3.3. Data Analysis
3.4. Limitations

Reflect…

… on shortcomings or decisions taken during previous stages

… on how you, as a researcher, affect the data negatively

… on access to data, trust, and biases

… on steps you took to minimize limitations

Reference secondary literature on your chosen methodology

Methodology Chapter for Quantitative Research

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design
3.2. Data Collection
3.3. Data Analysis
3.4. Limitations

Explain…

… the philosophical approach and underlying research rationale

… method vs. methodology

… methods in detail

Adapt the level of technical detail to your audience (assume you are talking to a child (not my words) when writing for anyone in sinology)

Reference secondary literature on your chosen methodology

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design
3.2. Data Collection
3.3. Data Analysis
3.4. Limitations

Report on your data set

- Set boundaries for data collection
- Mention problems that exist in the data
- State important characteristics

Define and explain variables

- Operationalization of variables, as well as assumptions and imputations
- Report on the reliability and vailidity

Reference secondary literature on your chosen methodology

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

3.2. Data Collection

3.3. Data Analysis

3.4. Limitations

State the statistical methods

- Type (OLS regression, …)
- Name the software (R, STAT, Excel, SPSS, …)

Report model specifications

- State the model used
- Identify the (in-)dependent variables
- Explain how and why you ended up with your final model

Reference secondary literature on your chosen methodology

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

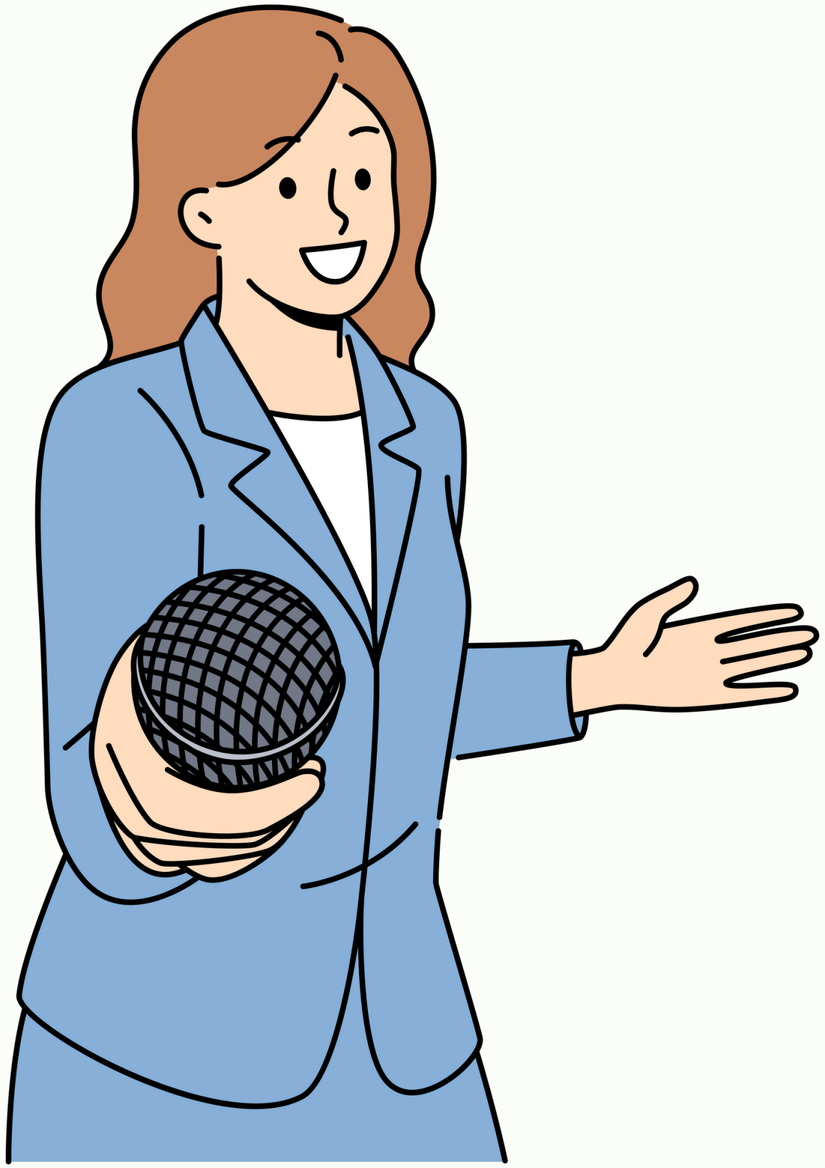
3.2. Data Collection

3.3. Data Analysis

3.4. Limitations

Limitations are your friend!

- They show that you understand the model
- They prove that you have reflected on your chosen methods
- They give you an opportunity to be honest and transparent
- Reflect on problems in terms of generalization

Reference secondary literature on your chosen methodology

Questions?