

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

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Abstract

This paper examines the relevance of qualitative research methodology as a systematic method of inquiry that seeks to build a holistic approach that is largely narrative, a description to inform researchers' understanding of social or cultural phenomena. Qualitative research method has some common characteristics including: natural setting, researcher as participant, subject-based communication, subject intentionality and pragmatic. Similarly, qualitative research methods are key importance in; developing an understanding on human and social sciences to find the way people think. It is also holistic in nature because it focuses on a wide range of population and concentrated on problems that affect population entirely. Qualitative research is also subjective in approach among other key importance. In the same vein, there are many circumstances that warrant the use of qualitative research method. For instance, it is appropriate to the study of attitudes and behaviors best understood within their natural setting. It is well suited to the study of social processes overtime where statistics are not use at all. Also, qualitative research are suitable for small group discussions for investigating beliefs, attitudes and concept of normative behavior, semi-structured interviews to find out views on a focused topic or with key background information or an institutional perspective, in-depth interviews to understand a condition, experiences or event from personal experience, analysis of texts and documents. Finally, qualitative researchers fine-tune the pre-conceived notions, analyzing and estimating the issue from an in-depth perspective.

Keywords: Attitudes, Holistic Approach, Inquiry, Qualitative Research, In-depth interviews.

Introduction

Research is refers to a method of gathering, analyzing and interpreting the information which could be useful for solving Social problems in the society. It includes the manipulation of variables or concepts for the purpose of generating, expending, correcting and verifying the knowledge which can help the building a theory or the practice of an art. Garyand and Atkinson (1996) define research as a formal systematic application of the scientific method to the study of problems. In the word of Amin (2003), research is a

systematic search for knowledge and it is an intellectual endeavor pursued at the frontiers for the cardinal objectives of extending such knowledge and the enhancement of it for the improvement of society in general. Research must be systematic, well planned, organized and has specific goals which involves observing, theorizing experimenting, to test a theory or set of theories, drawing conclusion and reporting results (Kakooza, 2002).

According to Dlakwa (2010), research is divided into two categories; the first research is geared toward generating theories through testing hypothesis within an experimental or quasi-experimental setup against the background of a specific theoretical frame work, while the second is policy type of research which primarily focused on the applicability or adaptability of certain intervention strategies within a given restricted environment. Furthermore, there are various methods of formulating a research design for the study. Two broad approaches of conducting research, data collection and interpretations are qualitative and quantitative research. The elementary method of conducting research was quantitative, but recently, qualitative method of research has also gained momentum among researchers.

Qualitative research focuses in understanding a research query as a humanistic or idealistic approach. Though, quantitative approach is a more reliable method as it is based upon numeric and methods that can be made objectively and propagated by other researchers. Qualitative method is used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior and interactions. It generates non-numerical data. The integration of qualitative research into intervention studies is a research strategy that is gaining increased attention across disciplines. Qualitative research was initially used in psychological studies when researchers found it tedious to evaluate human behavior in numeric (Vibha, Bijayini and Sanjay, 2013). Since then, qualitative research is used in other research fields as well including the social behavioral sciences, where it helps view the data more extensively.

From the above therefore, this paper is divided into sections including conceptualizing qualitative research method, characteristics of qualitative research, key importance of qualitative research method and circumstances that warrant the use of qualitative research methods in research studies.

Conceptualizing Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative research is a systematic scientific method of inquiry which seeks to build a holistic largely narrative, description to inform the researchers understanding of social or cultural phenomena. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), qualitative research is defined as primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying relationships among categories. This type research is an umbrella term for a broad range of different approaches and methods, which vary considerably in terms of focus, assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the role of the researcher. Therefore the purpose of qualitative research is to promote greater understanding of not just the way things are, but also why they are. Through intensive and extensive observation, interview and discussions, the qualitative research seeks to derive and describe findings which promote greater understanding of how people and why people behave the way they do. This is done through explanation gain and understanding of phenomena by intensive

collection of narrative data. For instance in conducting a research on the behavior of women suffering from Visco Virginal Fistula (V.VF) who are in rehabilitation centre where many of them were aggressive due to stigma, so the researcher must go and find out how and why they behave as they do. The main tool of collecting qualitative data is the researcher him/herself; hence before conducting effective research, the researcher needs proper training and practice in the method to be used.

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

While quantitative research can be tremendously in its dominant theory, mode of expression and set of procedures, we do think that across the rich diversity of qualitative research studies undertaken, all of these studies tend to share five common characteristics. According to James, Chesebro and Borisoff (2007), the common characteristics include;

1. **Natural setting:** Investigation and data collection are conducted in a geographical location, time and set of rituals determined, if not controlled, by the subjects. The environment is not and was never intended for the investigation and data collection. Some argue that a simulation of natural setting can be equivalent and control symbol-using in the same way that a natural setting does.
2. **Researcher as participant:** The researcher is perceived by the subjects as a participant in some significant way. While the investigator may be known as a researcher, the verbal and non-verbal actions of the investigator are not perceived as stemming from the role of the researcher.
3. **Subject-based communication:** The subjects are allowed to identify and determine topics of communication, provide any qualifiers they see fit. The researcher's objectives and research questions do not generate and guide the communication topics, transitions and qualifiers of the subjects.
4. **Subject intentionality:** The researcher seeks to capture and preserve the communication and symbol-using of subjects as the subjects understand and intend them.
5. **Pragmatic:** The specific results obtained have immediate utility and /or produce direct and instant insight into ongoing social processes and outcomes; the research analysis resolves an existing social problem. it may not contribute to theory development.

Key Importance of Qualitative Research Method

1. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry that develops understanding on human and social sciences to find the way people think
2. Qualitative research is holistic in nature; this is because it focuses on a wide range of population and concentrated on problems that affect the entire population like poverty kidnapping violence and so on.
3. The qualitative research follows a subjective approach as the researcher is intimately involved.
4. Qualitative research is based on purposive sampling, where a small sample size is selected with a view to get a thorough understanding of the target concept.
5. In qualitative research, verbal data are collected through interview or focused group discussion.

6. Qualitative research is conducted with the aim of exploring and discovering ideas used in the ongoing process as opposed to other types of research where the purpose is to examine cause and effect relationship between variables.

Circumstances that warrant the use of Qualitative Research

One of the key strength of qualitative research method is how comprehensive a perspective it can give researchers. By going directly to the social phenomenon under study and observing it as completely as possible, researchers can develop a deeper and fuller understanding of its. As such this mode of observation is especially though not exclusively appropriate to research topics and social studies that appear to defy simple quantification. Qualitative researchers may recognize several nuances of attitudes and behaviors that might escape researchers using other methods.

Qualitative research is appropriate to the study of attitudes and behaviors best understood within their natural setting as opposed to the somewhat artificial setting of experiments and surveys. For example, qualitative research provides a superior method for studying the dynamics of religious conversion at a revival meeting, just as a statistical analysis of membership rolls would be a better way of discovering whether men or women were more likely to convert. Similarly qualitative research is well suited to the study of social processes overtime. Thus, the field researchers might be in a position to examine rumbling and final explosion of a riot as events actually occur rather than afterward in a reconstruction of events. Other good places to use qualitative method in data collection includes camp demonstrations, courtroom proceedings, labour negotiations, public hearing or similar events taking place within a relatively limited area and time.

Qualitative method is done on a much more individual basis and it is the analysis of social phenomena and statistics are not use at all (Bryman,2004), viewed that a qualitative method is best when the researcher exploring a subject about what he/she don't know much in advance or for the opposite reasons. For instance, if you want to grasp the meaning, motives, reasons patterns e.t.c. qualitative method is more appropriate. It is also used to ensure questions about experience, meaning and perspective about social life, most often from the stand point of the participant. These data are usually not amenable to counting or measuring.

Furthermore, qualitative method includes small group discussions for investigating beliefs, attitudes and concept of normative behavior, semi structured interviews, to find out views on a focused topic or with key background information or an institutional perspective, in-depth interviews to understand a condition, experiences or event from personal experience, analysis of texts and documents for instance government reports, media articles, websites or diaries. Also Adamu (2010), have clustered and categorized qualitative research into five, phenomenology, ethnography, case study research, grounded theory and historical research. Therefore, qualitative method in a research such as investigating, exploring, describing and explaining the culture of a giving population or sub groups: society it is also used to described things which are part of the world event situations, experiences, investigating individuals live experiences or events. Qualitative research method also is more relevant in developing new knowledge and theories on the topic being investigated, not only adding the knowledge on the existing knowledge or

theories it is also used to investigate small number of units such as individual people for instance interviewing a patient attending clinic about mode of services rendered by health worker. It is also suitable than quantitative method in a research about past events. Also, Shazia Jamshed (2014) argued that, qualitative research methodology is considered suitable when the researcher investigates new field of study or intends to ascertain and theorize prominent issues. For Shazia, there are many qualitative methods which are developed to have an in depth and extensive understanding of the issues by means of their textual interpretation and the most common types are interviewing and observation. Interviewing is the most common format of qualitative data collection in which the practices and standards be not only recorded, but also achieved, challenged and as well as reinforced. Most of the qualitative research interviews are unstructured, semi-structured, lightly structured or in-depth. Similarly, the observational qualitative research method which not only included participant's observation, but also covered ethnography and research work in the field. In the observational research design, multiple study sites are involved. Observational data can be integrated as auxiliary or confirmatory research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, research can be visualized and perceived as painstaking methodical efforts to examine, investigate as well as restructure the realities, theories and applications. By using qualitative research methods, researchers or investigators are going to fine-tune the pre-conceived notions as well as extrapolate the thought process, analyzing and estimating the issue from an in-depth perspective. This could be carried out by one-to-one interviews or as issue-directed discussions.

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