

Course : Research Research methodology

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Level : L3

Lecture : 2

Qualitative Research

Objectives

In this lecture, students will learn what qualitative research is.

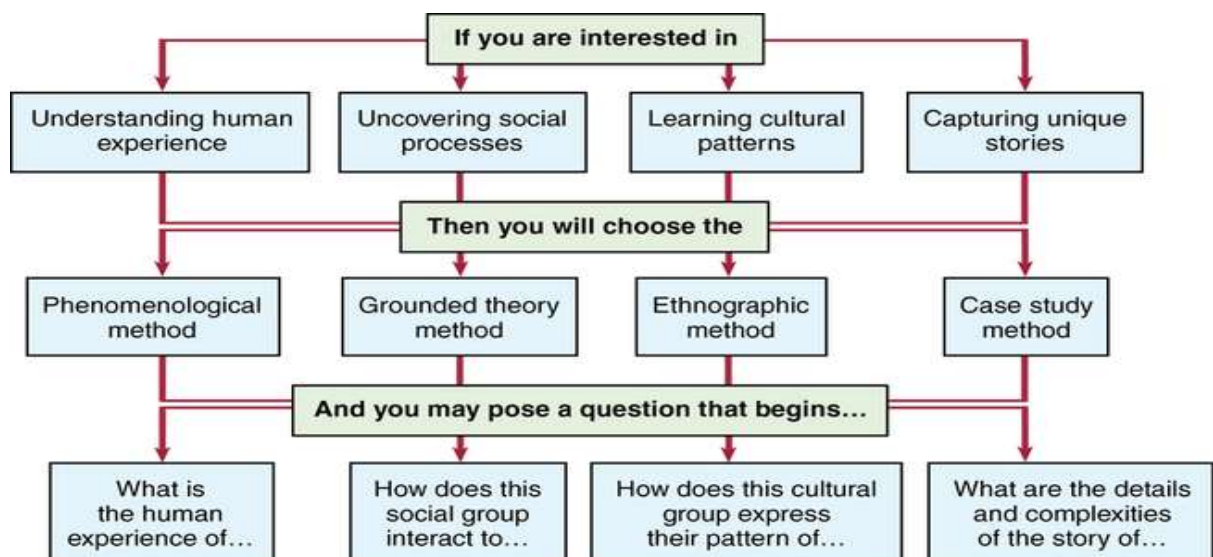
- Identify and describe types of qualitative designs.
- Identify and describe qualitative research methods
- Identify types of qualitative analysis

1. Definition of qualitative research

Qualitative research is a process of inquiry to understand a social or human problem from multiple perspectives; conducted in a natural setting to build a complex and holistic picture of the phenomenon of interest. It is exploratory or diagnostic involving a small number of people. Qualitative research is an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world (Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.3).

2. Qualitative designs

The most important types of qualitative research are presented in this diagram.



2.1 Phenomenological method

The phenomenological method aims to describe, understand and interpret the meanings of experiences of human life. Human experiences are examined through the detailed description of the people being described. This approach involves studying a small group of people intensively over a long period of time. They seek to answer what, 'how and why of a certain phenomenon.

2.2 Grounded theory method

The grounded theory method is exploratory in nature well suited for investigating social processes that has attracted little prior research (Milliken, 2010).The main feature is to develop a new theory through the collection and analysis of data about a phenomenon. It is concerned with what happens and how people interact.

2.3 Ethnographic method

The researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a specific period; a cultural group can be a group of individuals who share a common social experience, location, or other social characteristic of interest. It is a methodology for descriptive studies of culture and people which include:

- Geographical- a particular region or country
- Religious
- Social / familial
- Shared experience

2.4 Case study method

The researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon bounded by time and activity (e.g., a programme, event, progress, institution, or social group) and collects information through a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time

3. Qualitative research methods

Qualitative research methods that can be used in qualitative studies include: interviews, observations and documents and audio-visual materials. The selection of the appropriate tools depend on the research questions.

3.1. Semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview is **the most common qualitative data gathering tool during** which the person being interviewed is the expert and the interviewer the student. This kind of interview **involves a number of open ended** questions based on the topic areas that the researcher wants to cover.

The open ended nature of questions posed defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in detail. If the interviewee has difficulty answering a question or provides only a brief response, the

interviewer can use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the question further

A good interviewer needs to be able to put the interviewee at ease, **needs good listening skills and needs to be able to manage an interview situation** so as to collect data that truly reflect the opinions and feelings of the interviewee concerning the chosen topic.

3.2. Unstructured interview

The unstructured interview is an open situation having greater flexibility and freedom. It is similar a free flowing conversation. No detailed interview guide is prepared in advance, although the researcher usually thinks of a few (1-6) opening questions. During the interview, the researcher may ask an occasional question for clarification and may give reinforcement feedback, but interruptions are kept to the minimum (Dorneiy, 2007: 136). For an unstructured interview to be successful, the interviewer needs to establish a good rapport with the interviewee.

3.3. Focus groups as the name suggests- it involves a group format whereby the researcher records the responses of a small group (usually 6-12 members). The focus group is based on the collective experience of brainstorming, that is, participants thinking together, inspiring and challenging each other, and reacting to emerging issues (Dorneiy, 2007: 144)

3.4. Classroom observation

The distinctive feature of observation as a research process is that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations.

To organize the many different ways in which we can observe classrooms, two dichotomies are usually offered 'participant versus non-participant' and 'structured versus unstructured'. These are very similar to quantitative and qualitative distinctions in observation terms.

- The former involves completing an observation scheme, while the latter involves completing narrative field notes, often supplemented by maps or diagrams (Dorneiy, 2007: 144).
- Schemes – similar to questionnaires- have a range of systematic categories that allow the observer to record events quickly by using tally marks (ibid: 180). Schemes also need to be piloted.

In planning observations, one has to consider the following:

- When, where, how and what to observe
- How much degree of structure is necessary in the observation
- The duration of the observation, which must be suitable for the behaviour to occur and observed
- Timing of the observation period
- The context of the observation
- The nature of the observation (structures, semi-structures, unstructured)
- The need to choose the appropriate kind of recording (Cohen *et.al.*, 2007).

Techniques for collecting data through observation

- **Written descriptors:** the researcher can record observations of people, a situation or an environment by making notes of what has been observed.
- **Video recording:** this frees the observer from the task of making notes
- **Artefacts:** artefacts are objects which inform us about a phenomenon under study because of their significance to the phenomenon. Examples it could be doctor's equipment in a particular clinic or art work hung in residential care homes

Other methods for collecting data

- The think-aloud technique (introspective)
- Diary studies
- Research journals
- Collection of narrative
- Open-ended questionnaires

4. Types of qualitative data analysis methods

Interpretive phenomenological analysis: There are two main approaches to phenomenology: **descriptive and interpretive**. Descriptive phenomenology was developed by Edmund Husserl and interpretive by Martin Heidegger (Connelly 2010). The aim of descriptive phenomenology is to describe the human experience in terms of what was experienced and how.

The aim of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency for an IPA study is the meanings particular experiences, events and states hold for participants.

Discourse analysis: It focuses on text and talk as social practices. Discourse analysis is interested in the study of language in use, and any language in use transcripts of speech or texts are considered. In this type of qualitative study, researchers are interested in both the content and functions of discourse.

Thematic analysis: Thematic analysis consists of analyzing data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze and report repeated patterns (Braun and Clarke 2006). It is generally applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts in which the researcher examines the data to identify common themes (repeated ones).

Content analysis: Content analysis is a systematic research method for analyzing and making inferences from text and other forms of qualitative data (eg., interviews, focus groups, open-ended survey questions, documents and videos). It uses a variety of analytical strategies to categorize, compare and contrast a corpus of data.

Narrative analysis: This focuses on people's narrative stories which include personal essays, fairy tales, short stories, novels, plays, screenplays, autobiographies, histories, even news stories that have a narrative.

References

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