

# Determining the Application of a Qualitative Research for the Study

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**Abstract— Purpose** – The purpose of this submission is to discuss the qualitative research, with a view to understand what it is, and look at the likeliness of the applications to the analysis of the qualitative data collected for the creation of conceptual framework. **Design/methodology/approach** – The discussion will address the issues and decisions which are of consideration for determining the qualitative research characteristics so that there is an identification of the issues/phenomena that lend themselves to the research approach for analysis; and will go further by comparing and contrasting the qualitative research methodologies. This analysis will explore the research methods and recognize the need to do research to solve the individual organizational problems, and view the general framework of the research that will allow identifying the choices to be made as a researcher about what is to research and how to research it, and the logic that guides the particular choices. And will draw the research insights from publications and books that have contributed to the revelations about the nature and issues that may be an important part of qualitative research. **Findings** – The literature's main focus will be to get findings on the nature of the qualitative data collected, and with the empirical study, should look at the detailing of data presentation in the implications for the analysis, and look at how the data can prove to be of relevance, and will try to compare and contrast the different qualitative research methodologies.

**Keywords**— Research, collaborative and participatory methods, Inductive and deductive approaches, Epistemological, Ethnography, grounded theory, qualitative analysis, qualitative research, methodologies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research is a process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say. This is done by referring to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things, and uses very different methods of collecting information that includes individual, in-depth interviews and focused groups whose nature is exploratory and open ended, observations. These produces a mixture (Ghauri et al., 2010, P.105) of the rational, explorative and intuitive, where the skills and experiences of the researcher play an important role in the analysis of data. The particular skills required to do the qualitative research covers thinking abstractly, stepping back and analyzing situations, recognizing and avoiding biases, obtaining valid and reliable information, having theoretical and social sensitivity being able to keep analytical distance while utilizing past experience and having a shred sense of observation and interaction.

Qualitative research is applied for the systematic collection and interpretation of information with a clear purpose

(Saunders, et al. 2009. P.489) to find things out, and is structured as an enquiry that utilizes acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and create new knowledge that is generally applicable. The research is driven by practical outcomes rather than by theoretical understanding (Bryman et al., 2011, P.419) with distinguishing features of collaborative methods enquiry that assume members of the organization being studied to actively participate in the research process and also benefit from it. The participatory research's focus is on disempowered groups that are meant to be can be helped through research to address problems related to their welfare in an organized way. The researcher for the participatory should ideally be someone who is familiar with the community and committed to working towards improving their conditions.

With the qualitative research, there is a process of manipulation of things, concepts or symbols characterised by their richness and fullness based on the opportunity to explore a subject in as real a manner as is possible (Bryman et al., 2011, cited Robson 2002), correct or verify knowledge, whether that knowledge aids in construction of theory or in the practice of an art, and as such the research systematic method consists of the enunciating the problem (planning), that formulates a hypothesis, collecting the facts or data (data collection), analysing the facts and reaching certain conclusions (analysis) either in the form of solutions(s) towards the concerned.

However, the difference between qualitative and quantitative research is not of quality, but of procedure, as in qualitative research, findings are not arrived at by statistical methods or procedures of quantification, and the collection of data is quite common for researchers to collect data through observations and interviews involving small number of cases with the findings not generalized (White, 2000, P.107), where in depth interviews are informal and unstructured ensuring that there is participant observation allowing to undertake the study in a natural setting where the researcher, an instrument of data collection, gathers words or pictures, analyzing them inductively, with a focus on the meaning of participants, and describing a process that is both expressive and persuasive in language; with these the qualitative research as inquiry process will provide an understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that will explore a social or human problem.

### A. Research Objectives

However, the main objective of the qualitative research study is usually to understand on why data should be collected, and what should characterize the collection of data from a different source, before assembling in a single document (Saunders et al., 2009). The purpose is wanting to get the idea or product noticed by people and to suggest that people should have confidence in it. So for this, the research should be based on the characteristics of systematic data collection, systematic data interpretation, and clear purpose of undertaking the research to find things out, such as the answer to a question or number of questions in order to increase knowledge; and with the view that research findings should show that the researcher should tend to see the problem and bring about solution from the position and tasks that they are involved in (Ghauri et al., 2010).

### B. The Characteristics of Qualitative Research

The key purpose of qualitative research is to understand and gain insights like for the case when a researcher carefully reviews relevant literature and sees a research opportunity that as a gap, which is then viewed as a weakness or unanswered question in present insights (Ghauri et al., 2010) with its relevance in the context of discovery. The qualitative research tends to be more explorative and unstructured, with emphasis on understanding with a considerations of different assumptions, with emphasis on seeing the world from the eyes of the participants, striving to make sense of phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them, while quantitative tends more to emphasize descriptions and testing or derived hypothesis.

As stated by Ghauri et al. (2010, p.196), even though qualitative research may allow for tests of hypothesis with holistic emphasis towards studying the persons, groups, culture in the natural setting and on gaining insights and constructing explanations or theory with the ambiguity partly prevailing with regards to what distinguishes 'qualitative' and 'quantitative'. The qualitative research approaches or methods are multiple and no agreed upon classification of the various approaches or methods exist. The label qualitative methods is at best an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, or certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.

Qualitative research qualitative is used predominantly as a synonym for any data collection technique (such as an interview) or data analysis procedure (such as categorising data) that generates or use non-numerical data, and data collection and analysis are often conducted simultaneously in an interactive way where collected data are analysed, initiating new questions, and initiating further data collection; the main reason why it is important for continuous data collection and analysis is caused by modest a priori understanding of a problem (Saunders, et al., 2009, P.485), as the more data are collected and analysed the problem becomes gradually clarified, and for this the process of analyzing qualitative data

is likely to begin at the same time as the data collection is done well as to continue afterwards.

### C. Data Issues for Qualitative Research

In planning qualitative research, it is necessary to decide whether to collect new information or whether existing data are suitable to answer the research questions, the purpose of the research is to critically analyse issues/matters before believing in them (Ghauri et al., 2010). However, research is essential for understanding even the basic everyday phenomena that need to be handled by individuals and organisations. Any of the businesses are all committed to developing a strategic monitoring program to identify and understand competitor's strengths and overall business strategies as these are able to provide management with essential information about a range of strategies that rivals are likely to pursue. The decisions on the important issues can only be taken only when an investigation (research) is taken for relevant information, by gathering more information on the particular aspect of interest and analysing the collected information to make a judgement about the right solution to the problem or to answer the questions.

New information may be collected as part of a research project referred to as primary data, and covered under the self-reported and based on information provided by subjects for example in an interview and surveys for recent and intended outcome but dependent on people responding honestly, with an indication of how information is to be collected, and discussed based on the population and sampling where it is about generating of data based in conjunction with the participants (Lee et al., 2013). Existing data that has been collected by someone else for some other purpose are called secondary data based on observed data, where observation of subjects behaviour for example use records sheets and financial transaction, and is considered to be of high quality because of the rigorous sampling procedures employed (Brymn et al., 2007). The resulting in samples that are as close to being representative as one is likely to achieve beneficial outcome. With a view that samples are often national samples or at least cover a wide variety of regions, the datasets do enable for a cross comparison which could be dependent on being able to get data of area of interest. Qualitative sampling is often decidedly theory driven, either "up front" or progressively as applied in the grounded theory mode ((Brymn et al,2007 citing Miles et al.,1994), and the sampling both within the and across cases puts adds value to the constructs and their relationships.

### D. Choosing of Appropriate Methods for a Research

The process of choosing appropriate methods for a research task is part of the whole process of planning and designing a research project, analysing the research problem, understanding what information is really needed to have an interview and see who would be able to provide that information. A clear problem statement is (Ghauri et al., 2010) helps to know what to ask, and for drafting an interview guide or interview questions. The research question or hypothesis—research question can take variety of forms, but generally it

will point the researcher in the direction of certain data sources—for example in relation of employees, customer or organizations. Where previous research is to be applied, the proposed research should be closely keyed into the literature, then the methods used in that research are likely to influence the choice of methods. The aim may be to replicate the methodology in previous studies to achieve comparability and to improve on the methods used, or to deliberately adopt a contrasting methodology. Data availability/access in some cases for an existing data source is likely to present itself, and may even prompt the research.

II. QUALITATIVE APPROACHES

However, as the research is done in order to answer questions posed by theoretical considerations, with an alternative position to view theory as something that occurs after the collection and analysis of some or all of the data associated with a project (Bryman et al., 2011); the consideration is meant to bring about significance of relationship between a theory and research which is discussed with reference to deductive and inductive theory:

A. Deductive (Testing Theory) Approach

Deductive theory as a representative of the common view of nature of the relationship between theory and research with the basis of what is known about in a particular domain, and of theoretical considerations, is applied in relation to that domain to shape the approach that is to be adopted for the qualitative research process. The approach is considered for the aspects of data analysis (Saunders et al. 2009), and this deduces a hypothesis that is then subjected to empirical scrutiny, which should then deduce a hypothesis and translate it into operational terms. This should be done by determining a specified amount of data to be collected in relation to the concepts that make up the hypothesis.

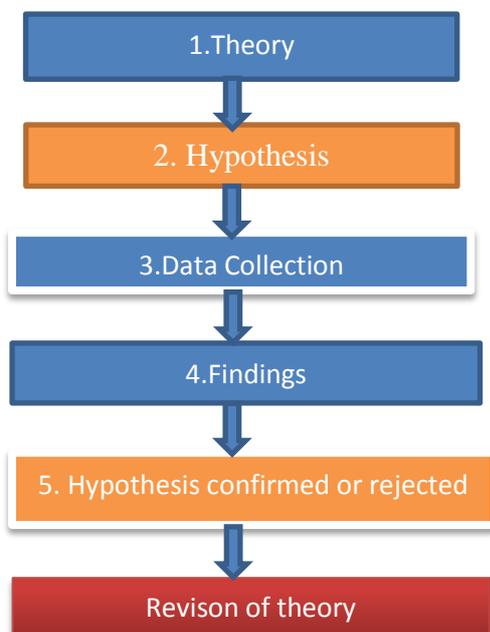


Figure 1: The process of Deduction (Source: Saunders et al. 2009)

B. Inductive (Building Theory) Approach

As an alternative to deductive approach, data is to be collected and then explored to see which themes or issues to follow up and concentrate on, with a belief (Saunders, et al., 2009 cited Yin 2003) that this inductive approach may be difficult a strategy to follow, and may lead to success for someone who is an experienced researcher, especially where data collection is done without examining them to assess which themes are emerging from the data as the research is progressed. Where data collection is done under the inductive approach, there is a need to analyse data as it is being collected and should be developed as a conceptual framework to guide subsequent work referred to as a grounded approach, this is because of the theory nature and the explanation that emerges as a result of the research process. The study should be commenced with a clear research purpose but not with a clearly defined theoretical framework, and should identify relationships between data and then develop questions and hypothesis or propositions for a test as it is from the process of data collection and analysis that the theory emerges.

III. APPROACHES TO QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The approaches of data collection and analysis could be applied from either the deductive where there is seeking of the use of existing theory to shape the approach that is to be adopted to the qualitative research process and to aspects of data analysis (Saunders et al., 2009, P.489); or inductive perspective where there is seeking of a buildup of a theory that is adequately grounded in the data. With the use of deductive approach, the prior specification of the theory tends to be disfavored because of the possibility of introducing a premature closure on the issues to be investigated (Bryman, 1988:81), as well as the possibility of the theoretical constructs departing excessively from the views of participants in social setting’.



Figure 2: Dimensions of qualitative analysis

The means to differentiate qualitative analysis may be problematic when used to map some analytical strategies or procedures, like in the application of grounded theory analysis procedures which may be more or less structured and procedurals depended upon the precise grounded theory strategy adopted (Saunders et al., 2009). The use of these dimensions can be a comparison to differentiate qualitative analysis more easily as the qualitative data to be applied for an organizational documentation. This is may also be summarized for proving the important source in their own right or used as a means of triangulating other data collected in order to provide a list of the key points contained for the description of the purpose of the document in its relation to the work and the significance.

#### IV. COMPARING AND CONTRAST THE DIFFERENT QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES.

Qualitative techniques are used at both the data collection and data analysis stages of a research project, and the research methodologies have roots in the variety of disciplines (Cooper et al., 2010) including sociology, semiotics, economics, anthropology etc. The choice of a qualitative methodology should be based on the project's purpose, its schedule, including the speed with which insights are needed, its budget, the issue(s) or topic(s) being studied, the types of participants needed, and the researcher's skill, personality and preferences.

#### V. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The three different types of the qualitative research methodologies which are concerned with how the researcher views the environment in which the research is being done are as follows: phenomenology, grounded theory and ethnography.

##### A. Phenomenology Methodology in Qualitative Research

Phenomenology methodology is with the interest in social meanings, seeking to interpret, using direct involvement, and creating data on social interactions; the features of phenomenology (Saunders et al., 2009) are rooted in philosophy whose central questions focuses on the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person/group of people, and is based on how each individual's subjective reality is applied to make experiences meaningful. The analysis of the language used is focused on revealing the meaning of the lived experience from the perspective of participants.

Phenomenology is meant to determine what an experience means for the persons who has had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it,' referring to the way (Saunders et al, 2009, citing Moustakas, 1994) in which we as humans make sense of the world around us. From the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essences of structures of the experience.' The research focus reveals the meaning of the lived experience from the perspective of participants while describing the essences (elements related to the true meaning of something that gives common understanding to the phenomenon under study) of lived experience which is conveyed with a descriptive language drawn from philosophy that is used across disciplines.

##### B. Grounded Theory Methodology

The grounded Theory method is expected to be used for a structured interview, with the subsequent interview being adjusted based on the findings and interpretations from each of the previous interview. This is done with the purpose to develop general concepts or theories with which (Cooper et al., 2010) to analyse data based on the focus to develop a theory to explain underlying social processes of a cultural group. This is expected to be considered as being useful in areas where little is known or when a new perspective is needed for exploratory or descriptive studies because the

theory that is emerges to from the data is said to be grounded in the data and its foundation is in symbolic interactionism.

The symbolic interactionism should be based on the aspect that humans act and interact on the basis of symbols, with a meaning and value for the actors expecting the researcher to have an open mind right from the start (White, 2000, P.110. The intention of grounded theory is to generate or discover a theory that relates to a particular situation with a focus to develop a theory for explaining underlying social processes of a cultural group. If little is known about a topic, grounded theory is especially useful for data collection and analysis occurring simultaneously, until "saturation" is reached, data reviewed and coded for categories and themes.

##### C. Ethnography Methodology

The Ethnography methodological approach for a qualitative research method is mainly focused on the study of human behavior in the cultural context embedded in areas such as anthropology and sociology (Maylor et al, 2005, P.144), and works towards discovering how behavioral norms of people's judgment is affected, and how the same human behavior's judgment in turn tends to shape the cultural norms as a form of culture (the way of life of a cultural group). The study of ethnography is rooted in anthropology, also called participant observation/ naturalistic enquiry (Ethno = people, graphy = describing something, characterised by immersion) with a focus to the study of human behaviour in the cultural context in which it is embedded.

Under ethnography there is special emphasis on a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system with regard to societal values and beliefs, the practices that confirm those values, attitudes, perceptions or motivations as well as language essentially giving life to a culture. The researcher examines the group's observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life. Under the ethnography study (Maylor et al., 2005, P.144), it involves prolonged observation of the group, typically through participant observation, field work, key informants, thick description, emic (insider group perspective) and Etic (researcher's interpretation of social life), context important, need holistic view, need grounding in anthropology , need extensive time to collect data as many ethnographies may be written in a narrative or story telling approach which may be difficult for the audience accustomed to usual social science writing.

#### VI. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The account of the methods' weaknesses and strengths gives details for readers to make own judgments on the validity and reliability of the study and findings (Ghauri et al., 2010).The reader should receive conviction that the research work has been done by investigating a certain problem area with systematic data collection and data analysis, presented in a logical, easy-to-read and understandable report. The reader should have followed the technically correct and consistent method expected of a qualified report that hypothesis and/or conclusions are properly supported by existing literature and

empirical evidence with logical congruence between different parts of the report.

The researcher's strengths should potentially allow for complexity due to overwhelming masses of data of which many may be irrelevant, thus, redundancy of data is often the case. The strength for the research data collection and analysis are often conducted simultaneously in an interactive way where collected data are analyzed (Ghauri et al. 2010), initiating new questions, and initiating further data collection with a provision for a depth of issues in the research and with a provision of insights good for examining feelings and motivations. The weaknesses of the qualitative research is based on the volume of the data that brings about the complexity for analysis, and is time consuming requiring clerical efforts such that the research cannot extrapolate to the whole population.

#### VII. SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES.

Qualitative research draws data from a variety of sources that includes primary and secondary sources: people (individuals or groups), organisations or institutions, texts (published, including virtual ones), settings and environments (visual and virtual material), objectives, artefacts, media products, events and happenings (textual/visual/sensory and virtual material). With the sources of data, it is evident that the sources of the qualitative research weaknesses and strengths are based on interviews, documentation, archival records, direct observation, participant observation, physical artefacts.

In interviews (Saunders, et al., 2009), it can be noted that the qualitative research may ably target the area for research and with full insight, but may as well exhibit weaknesses of bias due to poorly articulated questions, response bias as the findings may be relied upon by the researcher's often unsystematic views about what is important and also upon the close personal relationships that the researcher frequently strikes up with the people studied, inaccuracies due to poor articulated questions and reflexivity.

For the documentation and archival records, there is a need for a broad coverage in the research strength for a stable, unobstructive, exact to meet the requirements which is also precise. This is to ensure that weaknesses that affect the documentation retrievability, biased selectivity, reporting bias, and access to documents are considered. The challenges on the use of documents to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources should allow readers make personal judgements on the validity and reliability of the study and findings (Ghauri et al., 2010). The other challenges on internet search prior to visit may be a problem to access records due to issues of privacy reasons as most of the data take a form of computer files and records, e.g. organizational records (budget or personnel records) and as usefulness of archival records vary from essential to passive relevance.

#### VIII. OBSERVATIONS FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Direct observations for qualitative research have an advantage of introducing a high degree of structure to the interview schedule and will lessen the threat to reliability. The

reality in the structure also brings about contextuality to data, but at the same time it may also be time consuming, since as a researcher may be forced to write everything being said. It is may also be difficult to decide what is important or is irrelevant, selectivity, reflexivity, and costly, and the observer may be bias. With the observations, to gain access to organisations, the researcher may be subjected to very formal process involving a lengthy sequence of letter writing and meetings (Bryman et al., 2011, and could be predominantly closed or non-public access for example the factory work, classrooms.

The participant observations in addition to direct observation has the strengths for insightful into interpersonal behaviour and motives with a requirement for an access to an organizational setting that may provide the basis for a more modest study, and with the weaknesses of bias due to participant-observer's manipulation of events. The physical artefacts are determined by the strength of insightful into the cultural features and technical operations with limitation of weaknesses based on the selectivity and availability of the technological devices, tools or instruments and the work of art.

#### IX. CONCLUSION

A research project is a wonderful opportunity for a researcher to contribute not just to the knowledge base, but in some way, however small, to make new findings that will improve what is already known. Despite that working on the research project could be stressful, it is of relevance that the study provide career and personal development. It is of benefit that the qualitative research is usually reported using the generic structures and sometimes content with details of the particular research project. Since in qualitative research there is a need to identify several themes rather than converge on a single theme through deduction, as in quantitative research, it is probable necessary to structure the core of the report around the themes, which means that there is a need to integrate the literature review and the findings from the research around the theme or themes, or may integrate the literature review with the findings and discussion, especially if it is a grounded theory approach which is being followed.

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