

Research Methods: Qualitative Approach

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Qualitative & Quantitative Data

- Data are the evidence.
- Methods are the tools for data collection.
- Methods are typically linked to Worldviews (paradigms)
 - Represent broad assumptions about how project should be done
 - positivist worldview (paradigm)
 - interpretive paradigm

Qualitative Design

- Use cases and context to examine social processes
- Looks at interpretation or the creation of meaning in specific settings
- Look at social life with multiple points of view
- Look at how people construct identities
- Rarely use variables or test hypotheses
- See data as highly meaningful**

Inquiry approaches

- Phenomenology Studies
 - Obtaining authorities' verbal descriptions based on their perceptions of a phenomenon
 - Aim is to find common themes or elements that comprise the phenomenon
 - Discover and describes the elements (texture) and underlying factors (structure) that comprise the experience of the researched phenomenon
 - Use in-depth interviews

Inquiry approaches...

• **Grounded Theory**

- Theory developed during data collection process
- Theory built from data or grounded in the data
- Conceptualization and operationalization occur simultaneously with data collection and preliminary data analysis
- Open to unexpected
- Builds theory by making comparisons
- Ponders questions and looks for similarities and differences

Inquiry approaches...

- **Case Studies**

- An in depth exploration of a program, activity, process, or one or more individuals
- Cases bounded by time and activity
- Researcher collect detailed information using variety of data collection procedures over a period of time

- **Narrative studies**

- In depth study of the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives
- Information is retold or re-storied by researcher into a narrative chronology
- Incorporation of participant's life with those of researcher's (collaborative narrative)

Qualitative data are empirical

- Documenting real events
- Recording what people say (with words, gestures, and tone)
- Observing specific behaviors
- Studying written documents
- Examining visual images
- “hard” data to measure attitudes, social pressure, intelligence and the like

Qualitative Research

- Provides opportunity for the researcher to step beyond the known and enter into the world of the participants
- See the world from the participant's perspective
 - Interested in how persons experience events
 - Interested in the meanings that they give to experience of events
 - Examine the context in which those experiences are framed or embedded
 - Describe the process or ongoing and changing forms of action/interaction/emotions taken in response to events and problems that arise to inhibit action/interaction
 - Make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge

Why do qualitative analysis?

- Research question should dictate the methodological approach used to conduct the research
- Qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants
 - Determine how meanings are formed through and in culture
 - Discover, rather than test variables
- Qualitative research is fluid, evolving, and dynamic
- Leaves room for discovery
- Provides opportunity for the researcher to connect with the participants at a human level
- Get to play with words making order out of dis-order
- Thinks in terms of complex relationships

Qualitative Conceptualization

- Researchers refine rudimentary “working ideas” during the data collection and analysis process
- Conceptualization is a process of forming coherent theoretical definitions as one struggles to “make sense” or organize the data and one’s preliminary idea
 - Concepts and evidence are treated as mutually interdependent
- New concepts and definitions are developed during the gathering and analysis
- Concepts are then linked to create theoretical relationships that may or may not be causal.

Qualitative Operationalization

- Researcher forms conceptual definition out of rudimentary “working ideas” used while making observations or gather data
- Researchers operationalize by describing how specific observations and thoughts about the data contributed to working ideas
- An after-the-fact description more than a before preplanned technique
- Data gathering occurs with or prior to full operationalization

Context is critical

- Emphasize the social context for understanding the world
 - What came before OR what surrounds the focus of study
 - Same events or behaviors can have different meanings in different cultures or historical eras
 - What is the meaning and importance of certain traditional healing practices and how does it impact on healthcare use among Haitian born older adults?

Case and process

- Cases same as units of analysis (or unit on which variables are measured)
- Use “case-oriented” approaches
 - Focus is on the cases (older Haitian adults)
 - Focus on “contingencies” (i.e., the co-occurrence of many specific factors and events in one place and time)
- Gives detail and insight into the cases (as oppose to statistical analysis of precise measures)
- Sequence of events important (first event, second, etc.)
 - Examine same cases or sets of cases over time
 - Able to see issues as they evolve

Interpretation

- Assign significance or a coherent meaning to something
- Meaning is achieved by rearranging, examining, and discussing textual or visual data in a way that conveys an authentic voice, or that remains true to the original understandings of the people and situations that he or she studied.
- Translates the originally gathered data

Stages of Interpretation

- First-order interpretation
- Second-order interpretation
- Researcher tries to elicit an underlying coherence or sense of overall meaning in the data
- Links the understanding to a larger concept, generalization, or theories

Coding Qualitative Data

- Two simultaneous activities occur as you code:
 - Mechanical data reduction
 - Analytic data categorization
- **Open Coding**
- **Axial Coding**
- **Selective Coding**

Reliability in qualitative research

- Inter-raters engage in attentive reading
- Inter-raters have basic agreement/understanding of topic
 - Apriority Guide
- Inter-rater reliability used as a *Solidification* tool that will contribute to quality of study
 - Verification of findings during the process of the study
 - Prior to formulating final conclusions

Marques & McCall, (2005)

Validity of qualitative research

- Certain measures taken to ensure validity
 - Triangulation
 - Respondent validation
 - Clear exposition of methods of data analysis
 - Reflexivity
 - Attention to negative cases
 - Fair dealing

Table 4.1 Quantitative Research versus Qualitative Research

Test hypothesis that the researcher begins with	Capture and discover meaning once the researcher becomes immersed in the data
Concepts are in the form of distinct variables	Concepts are in the form of themes, motifs, generalizations, and taxonomies.
Measures are systematically created before data collection and are standardized	Measures are created in an ad hoc manner and are often specific to the individual setting or researcher.
Data are in the form of numbers from precise measurement	Data are in the form of words and images from document, observations, and transcripts
Theory is largely causal and is deductive	Theory can be causal or noncausal and is often inductive
Procedures are standard, and replication is assumed	Research procedures are particular, and replication is very rare
Analysis proceeds by using statistics, tables, or charts and discussing how what they show relates to hypotheses	Analysis proceeds by extracting themes or generalizations from evidence and organizing data to present a coherent, consistent picture

(Newman, 2012)

Some References

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