

Qualitative Research

Advantages of Qualitative Research

- ◆ In-depth Examination of Phenomena
- ◆ Uses subjective information
- ◆ Not limited to rigidly definable variables
- ◆ Examine complex questions that can be impossible with quantitative methods
- ◆ Deal with value-laden questions
- ◆ Explore new areas of research
- ◆ Build new theories

Why Qualitative Research?

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on reasons behind various aspects of behavior.

Simply put, it investigates the why and how of Decision-making, as compared to what, where, and when of quantitative research.

Hence, the need is for smaller but focused samples rather than large random samples,

which in qualitative research categorizes data into patterns as the primary basis for

organizing and reporting results. Why Choose Qualitative Research?

§Qualitative research is a reaction against positivism

§Positivism is the perspective that an objective reality exists and that the scientific method (deductive methods) can be used to know that objective reality

Qualitative research is based on subjectivism, relativism, constructivism, etc.. which embrace the notion that reality is self-and culturally determined

§Therefore inductive methods are used in qualitative research to understand “reality”

The Limits of Empiricism

Though necessary, empiricism is not sufficient in itself to build knowledge.

No array of statistical techniques can produce cumulative knowledge.

Empirical data becomes knowledge

when referred to theory for

understanding. History of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research approaches

began to gain recognition in the 1970s.

§The phrase 'qualitative research' was until then marginalized as a discipline of anthropology or sociology, and terms like ethnography, fieldwork, participant observation and the Chicago school (sociology) were used instead. Fields Using Qualitative Research

During the 1970s and 1980s qualitative research began to be used in other disciplines, and became a dominant - or at least significant - type of research in the fields of women's studies, disability studies, education studies, social work studies, information studies, management studies, nursing services studies, human services studies, psychology, and others. 6 Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Designs rely on participant observation, case studies and the focused interview.

Sampling is non-random; subjects are recruited; studies cannot be easily replicated; findings cannot be generalized.

The researcher – is the instrument of data collection.

Data is non-numerical –field notes, audio tapes, video tapes, photographs, documents/reports. Qualitative Research Designs

Narrative Research

(aka: biography)

Phenomenology

Grounded theory

Ethnography

Case Study

8 Types of Narrative/Biography

Life History

– refers to the experiences a person has lived through

Life Story, Biography

– someone’s narrated, personal life story as related to another in conversation or as written down in present time

Life Course

--involves study of the social patterns in the timing, duration, spacing, and order of events and roles of human life trajectories recognizing that these elements are consequences of plans that people carry forth within the constraints of their social world. Biographical “Glasses” in Social Work

Possible even in short encounters.

A question of relating to the client?

Seeing that the person has an identity and a biography, which are thus validated even if not known?

v Understanding that biography has been lived in a context, psychological as well as social (micro / macro)? Noticing a possible need for a longer biographical interview?

Other than verbal means of storytelling

Uses a life-span perspective

Biographic Interviews as Intervention

Just telling your life story to someone
can have psychological effects

Helps integrating and making sense

Furthers self-understanding without
much interpretation

Gives ideas for planning the future

Examples of Life Stories in Social Work

Psychosocial Assessments

Vocational Rehabilitation

Substance Misuse

Chronic Illness, Disabilities

Elderly and Dying

Bereavement

Peer Support Groups

Ethical Considerations of Biographies

For what purpose?

When and when not?

Raises expectations of help that cannot be met?

Analysis and interpretation – by whom?

How will it be used? By whom?

Confidentiality?

Informed consent?

Options for Qualitative Research

Participant Observation

Key Informant Interviews

Open-ended Interview

Focus Group Discussions Creating a Topic Guide

Avoid close-ended questions: go for
experience and perspectives

Issues based on your research questions

Topic areas, then questions within each
topic, list probes

Start with icebreakers and “

Easy question

Qualitative Research Summary: Qualitative methods aim to make sense of, or Interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them Qualitative research may define preliminary questions which can then be addressed in Quantitative studies. A good qualitative study will address a clinical problem through a clearly formulated question and Analysis of qualitative data can and should be done using explicit, s