

Chapter-7

Qualitative research: another view point

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Introduction

It is basically a descriptive exploratory research. Its major use is to understand underlying reasons and getting deep perception into the problem by motivating peoples and getting their opinions. It helps in generating the hypothesis. It Dives deeper and deeper into the problem and uncovers usual trends in thoughts and behaviors. With the development of social and medical sciences, researchers became interested in exploring human behavior and its interaction with environment. Host, agent and environmental interactions play important role in development and progression of qualitative research. Many scientists found observations, expressions, insight and evidence difficult to measure by using quantitative approach. So, the newer idea of qualitative approach was introduced to get better and in-depth understanding beyond the usual measurement of observations. Data collection is done by semi structured or unstructured methods. Observations, participation, individual interviews or focus group discussion are common techniques. Sample size is usually small and even one case report can generate sufficiently large evidence to generate a hypothesis.

Nature of qualitative Research

Social phenomena are explained by qualitative research. Here we explore deep, new questions arouse and are further explored and answered.

Qualitative questions are:

How

Why

What

For example

1. Why the things are happening in this way?
2. Why people behave like this?
3. How attitudes develop?
4. How the changes in surrounding alter behavior?
5. How the cultures develop?

Data collection approach / methods

In qualitative research data collection is a time taking procedure that makes it expensive, so the sample size is usually kept small. A more detailed and in-depth information about the topic under study is obtained, information is richer as compared to quantitative approach and that's the benefit of qualitative research.

Following are the data collection methods:

1. In-depth interviews
2. Focus groups
3. Observations
4. Action Research

In-depth Interviews

These interviews can be unstructured, semi structured or structured.

Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured are in depth interviews with little or no structure. Interviewer starts interview with few questions in mind and exploring in depth, letting the participant speak and freely express in a friendly manner. Here we get more in

depth and detailed information about the problem under study. Research and the subject have great discussion time exploring the problem under study. The questions during interview lead to different ideas and further questions.

Example:

A victim of Acid burn violence is probed about the quality of social support after the incidence. The guiding question is about the social support after she was attacked by acid. Then from her answer different questions are put forward till satisfactory answers are reached about the quality and types of social support she received after the incidence.

Semi structured or focused interviews

These are the interviews in which researcher makes a list or series of open ended questions about the problem under study. Subjects are asked questions in a friendly environment. Open ended questions provide opportunity for a great deal of discussion between researcher and the subjects. This method gives the researcher the freedom to probe the participant to explain or to follow a new line of investigation introduced by the subject while answering the questions. It works best when the researcher has a number of areas about whom he wants to be certain to inquire. If some ambiguity arises then the questions can lead to some new questions e.g., to specify the findings or observations.

Structured

Researcher asks the questions to the participants as they are already framed in a guide. Questions may have ordered response options like good, better and best. Researcher decides whether a questionnaire or a structured interview will be appropriate for the study. Schedule for the interview is tightly structured. There are few shortcomings of the structured interview. If the schedule is too tight, researcher may not be able to get in depth details and may not be able to explore at best.

Key Features for Interviews

For qualitative research, interviews should be conducted in a friendly informal manner just like routine conversation. To conduct a good qualitative research, skills are mandatory that are learnt with practice. Researcher should have good communication skill and must be well observant.

1. Ideas/ believes/ thoughts
2. Planning and Groundwork
3. Schedule Interviews
4. Conduct Interview to collect data
5. Analyze data carefully.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are group interviews. Here researcher interacts with the group at a time, individual interviews are not conducted. These are usually planned in situations.

1. When question under study requires group discussion, in researchers 's opinion.
2. Where funds, time or manpower is limited.
3. Where greater insight of the phenomena is required.

Key Features

1. Recommended sample size for focus group is 6 to 10 members per focus group. Neither smaller nor larger than this as smaller size would not be able to get enough discussion and explore deeply where with larger size it is not easy to conduct discussion and get useful information from it.
2. Recommended minimum number of focus groups per study is 3. One focus group may have different response then other. For deep and clear insight, we need more focus groups.
3. Members of the focus group should share something in common for example belongs to same experience, qualifications, institution, background, ethnicity, gender or age group.

4. Researcher should keep an eye over group dynamics. The time keeper should be available for smooth conduct.
5. Participant's views, thoughts, feelings and perceptions are very important.
6. Researcher must be skilled in communication, facilitation, moderation, listening, observing and analyzing.

Observation

It is the process of observing something that may be a phenomenon, natural process, individual, groups or location. Researcher usually collects data by either taking notes or using check list. These are usually designed to observe behaviors and activities. Settings are very significant for observation. Researcher may be observing in natural settings or may become part of the research to observe more closely.

Time Taking

1. Single observer finding, understanding and interpretation.
2. Researcher takes notes at the cost of missing observation.
3. Gives a snap shot view only
4. Participants behavior may change if they come to know that they are under observation.
5. Researcher may be observing natural settings and he may have to spend a lot of time and to give detailed description in the form of notes about what is happening.
6. Most of the Researchers believe that there are only few situations that can be studied in natural conditions. They claim that the presence of the researcher/ observer alters the phenomena and findings are not real.

Sometimes, the researcher becomes or needs to become a participant observer, where they are taking part in the situation in order to be accepted and further understand the workings of the social phenomenon.

Observation can sometimes obtain more reliable information about certain things - for example, how people actually behave (although it may not find out the reasons for why they behave in a particular way). Observation can also serve as a technique for authenticating or invalidating information provided in face to face encounters.'

People or environment can be observed.

When environment is researched, it can provide valuable background information that may inform other aspects of the research.

Techniques for data Collection

Written descriptions

1. **Observer** makes written descriptions of the people, phenomena, situations or environment.
2. Observer may miss out on an observation as they are taking notes.
3. Observer may be attentive on a particular event or situation.
4. There is always a room for individual interpretation of what is happening

Video recording

1. Researcher may take notes as well as record video.
2. May make notes after watching recorded videos.
3. Limitations may include people acting unnaturally towards the camera or others avoiding the camera. The camera may not always see everything.

Photographs and artefacts

These are used in situations where observable or visible information needs to be recorded like buildings, homes, neighbor hoods, dress or persons appearance etc. Artefacts comprise of substances of worth for example souvenirs, instruments or tools.

Documentation / Analysis of the written data

Here researcher Consider an area within his work that he may wish to observe in order to get an answer, find out more or gain a better understanding. It can be used for getting information about the topic under study that be a simple newspaper, a book, notes, any information pasted on website, notice board or an already published research paper etc.

Self Study

Consider an area within your work that you may want to observe in order to reach a conclusion, find out more or gain a better understanding.

Plan

1. What is the aim?
2. What kind of permission will be required?
3. What will be researcher's role?
4. How observations will be recorded?
5. What will be recorded?
6. What will be done after getting findings?

Action Research: Action Research not only comprise of asking about a problem, it includes practice.

Theories/ Method

Qualitative research methods are concerned with opinions, feelings and experience. They describe social phenomena as they occur naturally. They just understand and describe the situation no attempt is made to manipulate. Understanding is pursued by taking a general perception / holistic approach, rather than looking at a set of variables. Qualitative research data is used to help us to develop concepts and theories that help us to understand the social world which is an inductive method to the development of theory, rather than a deductive approach that quantitative research takes that means Testing theories that have already been proposed. Qualitative data is

collected through direct interaction i.e. through interview or observation and is pretty time consuming.

1. Ethnography/Ethnomethodology
2. Grounded Theory
3. Phenomenology
4. Philosophical Research
5. Critical social Research
6. Ethical inquiry
7. Foundational Research
8. Historical Research
9. Case Study
10. Bibliography
11. Hermeneutic research

Ethnography/ Ethnomethodology

Ethnography means portrait of a people or study of people. This is the description of people or cultures. Researcher may become a member of a particular culture to see through the eyes of the culture mates. Extensive field work is done for this type of study. Data collection usually involves direct observation or interviews at multiple times. Data analysis is done by the researcher by the participants views. Researcher wants to interpret what exactly the participant feels.

Limitations of this method are time consuming, expensive, Researcher may not be able to understand/ interpret language or behavior of the participants as he is not the realmember of the culture. Language, terminology and the meaning behind them may not be understood by the researcher. Extensive field work is also needed.

Example: Jane Goodal studied the life of chimpanzees by this method. He adopted their culture and lived with them in their natural habitat in Africa.

A study was conducted in Congo to see syphilis spread and its psychosocial effects.

Grounded Theory

Emergent is the keyword for grounded theory. Here the interpretations are continuously drawn from the raw data. Researcher usually begins with a wide topic and gathers data by qualitative methods, this leads to defining or refining the research topic or question. It is a dynamic study and can be revised at any time. Here the true story emerges from the data. At the end of the study comprehensive themes are generated.

Example:

Management of the hospital may want to know the effect of wearing overall on the discipline. Instead of making specific questions, they may interview doctors, patients, administration, may ask doctors to write an account on wear overall. Resistance or any other thing may be reported commonly. In grounded study, the management will study this common factor in more detail.

Phenomenology

Study of the phenomena or a track on the way to the understanding of a happening is the phenomenology. So here the researcher looks deep into a phenomenon from an individual or groups of individual's points of view. Feelings, reactions and perception about the phenomena are important and are the main interpretation of data.

Philosophical Research

It is conducted by experts of a field, maintaining the boundaries of that particular field for clarifying definitions, for ethical issue and for other judgments.

Critical social Research: It deals with people's behavior. How they communicate with each other and develop representative meanings.

Ethical inquiry: Academic investigation of ethical issues. It includes study of rights, obligations and other ethical issues.

Foundational Research: It describes the basis of a science, analyze thoughts and perceptions. In the light of gathered data changes the improves the scientific knowledge.

Historical Research: It answers the questions from both the past knowledge, experiences and believes. They may help to explain the events from present time and may predict future events.

Few questions answered by this type of methodology are, whom we belong, how we were born, how we became grown up?

Case Study: In depth study of a small number of units, may be as small as one. It's a study of people, relationship or events, there must be a uniting factor to bound the participants together. Its versatile and data collection involves many methods. It may be very simple using a single unit to more complex analysis over a period of time to even most complex where analysis is done in series to get more in-depth details of the particular case under study.

Biography: As the name reflects, it pertains to writing the life story. Here the researcher gathers data from the archival contents and different sources of media, including interviews, documentaries, articles, photos etc to compile the complete life history.

Hermeneutic Research: This research probe in the subjective meanings of texts, symbols, art, culture and social thinking. The communication may be verbal or non verbal and it gives meaning to the subject.

Data Analysis

Transcribing: Process of converting video or audio data to text for the purpose of analysis is known as transcribing.

Coding: The process of finding common themes from the text by reviewing notes/ text is known as coding. Manual coding as well as coding in software's are used.

Themes: Themes describe the results. The subthemes usually generate from main themes. The results are compiled in the form of themes, subthemes and categories.

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