



Designs, Types, and Methods in Qualitative Research

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ABSTRACT

Qualitative research is an approach to understanding human phenomena, culture, and social processes based on the perspective of the subjects being studied, so that it can provide deeper meaning to the problems that occur. The design, type, and method applied are adjusted to the objectives and characteristics of the problem, including ethnography, case studies, document studies, natural observations, phenomenology, grounded theory, historical studies, and biographies, with data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis focuses more on the interpretive and inductive process, so that it is able to explore the relationships and meanings behind the data, and is useful for more mature decision making and policy formulation.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian kualitatif merupakan pendekatan untuk memahami fenomena manusia, budaya, dan proses sosial berdasarkan perspektif subjek yang diteliti, sehingga dapat memberikan makna lebih mendalam mengenai masalah yang terjadi. Desain, jenis, dan metode yang diterapkan disesuaikan dengan tujuan dan karakteristik masalah, meliputi etnografi, studi kasus, studi dokumen, pengamatan alamiah, fenomenologi, grounded theory, studi historis, dan biografi, dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data lebih menitikberatkan pada proses interpretatif dan induktif, sehingga mampu menggali hubungan dan makna yang terdapat di balik data, dan berguna untuk pengambilan keputusan dan perumusan kebijakan yang lebih matang.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research is a crucial and relevant approach for understanding human phenomena, culture, and social processes from the perspective of the subjects being studied. It emphasizes processes and meanings rather than numerical measurements or mathematical calculations, thus providing a broader and

deeper understanding of the issues under investigation. In a qualitative approach, the research design, type, and methods are tailored to the objectives and characteristics of the problem, allowing for the depth and integrity of the collected information to be preserved.

Qualitative research design is flexible, open, and dynamic, enabling researchers to make

adjustments according to the context and conditions in the field. The types of qualitative research are also diverse, including ethnography, case studies, document analysis, naturalistic observation, phenomenology, grounded theory, historical studies, and biographical research, each offering a unique perspective and approach to the subject under investigation.

Data collection focuses on interpersonal and interactive processes, primarily using interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis is generally inductive, aiming to discover patterns, relationships, and meanings behind the collected data. This approach enables researchers to generate rich, human-centered, and in-depth insights. Qualitative research is expected to make a significant contribution not only to decision-making and policy formulation but also to the advancement of theory related to human and societal issues.

B. METHODOLOGY

The methods applied in qualitative research encompass data collection techniques and procedures for analyzing the gathered information. Data collection may involve:

- 1) Interview: A face-to-face conversation that can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, involving an interviewer and an informant to explore relevant experiences and perspectives.
- 2) Observation: A process of directly observing human behavior and social processes in the field. It can be conducted through participant observation, where the researcher actively engages in the setting, or non-participant observation, where the researcher remains an outside observer.
- 3) Documentation: The collection and examination of documents, written texts, artifacts, and photographs related to the research problem.

Data analysis in qualitative research emphasizes interpretative and inductive processes. It seeks to uncover relationships and meanings within the collected data, leading to conclusions that provide a more comprehensive, human-centered, and in-

depth understanding of the issue under study.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Berdasarkan proses pengumpulan dan analisis data, dapat disimpulkan bahwa desain, jenis, dan metode yang diterapkan turut menentukan kualitas dan kedalaman sebuah penelitian kualitatif. Desain yang fleksibel dan terbuka memberikan peluang luas bagi peneliti untuk melakukan eksplorasi lebih rinci mengenai masalah yang tengah diteliti, sehingga dapat memperoleh gambaran yang lebih luas dan manusiawi mengenai fenomena tersebut. Dalam proses tersebut, peneliti juga lebih peka dan mampu memahami makna, proses, dan hubungan yang terjadi di balik sebuah peristiwa, sehingga dapat memberikan interpretasi yang lebih luas dan mendalam mengenai masalah yang tengah dihadapi.

1. On Qualitative Research Design

A qualitative research design refers to the plan or framework used to structure and conduct research aimed at deeply and holistically understanding social, cultural, or human behavioral phenomena. This design focuses on the collection of qualitative data, such as interviews, observations, or document analysis, with the goal of exploring meanings, experiences, and processes within specific contexts. In qualitative research, researchers tend to prioritize broader social contexts, emphasizing flexibility, exploration, and an in-depth understanding of the subjective perspectives of participants or subjects involved in the study.

Qualitative research design is characterized by several distinctive features, as outlined below:

- 1) The natural setting is the primary source of data. In qualitative research, real-life events are the central focus of study. Researchers aim to understand and examine human behavior within the context in which it naturally occurs.
- 2) Research boundaries are based on focus. This involves the formulation of a study background and problem statement, defining the scope and limitations of the study. The research focus determines the extent and boundary of the issues to be examined.

- 3) The study is holistic, flexible, and open. Qualitative research views the whole as more significant than its individual parts. Variables cannot be separated from their contextual interrelationships. Therefore, each variable holds meaning only within its contextual unity. Planning in qualitative research is flexible and open, adapting to the actual conditions encountered in the field. Unlike rigid, a priori planning, the design evolves during the research process. Researchers may prepare a guiding framework beforehand but remain open to changes and adjustments as the study progresses.
- 4) The human being is the primary instrument of data collection. This allows for greater adaptability and responsiveness to the complexities of field realities. The researcher serves as the main tool for gathering information.
- 5) Data analysis is conducted inductively. Qualitative research does not begin with deductive reasoning from theory, but rather emerges from empirical observations. Researchers immerse themselves in the field, study the phenomena, analyze and interpret data, and draw conclusions from real-world experiences. Data analysis is conducted simultaneously with data collection, allowing findings to emerge organically and be built into theoretical frameworks.
- 6) The research is descriptive and analytical. The data collected—such as words, images, or behaviors—are not expressed in numerical or statistical forms, but remain in rich, qualitative narratives. Emphasis is placed on process over outcome. The natural, uncontrolled, and interactive dynamics of the research environment are central. Meaning is the primary focus of the qualitative researcher, who seeks to understand how people make sense of their lives. This is achieved through questioning and exploring subjective interpretations. The findings are derived from field data and shaped into concepts and meaning.

The final results of the study are reached through mutual agreement. The presentation of results, as interpretations of the data, is ideally negotiated with the

participants who served as sources of information, making the findings a shared construction of meaning.

2. Types of Qualitative Research

a) Ethnography

Ethnography is an in-depth study of naturally occurring behaviors within a particular social or cultural group, aiming to understand those behaviors or cultural patterns from the perspective of the participants. It is considered field research, as it is conducted in natural settings. The researcher observes individuals or groups to identify distinctive characteristics and recurring patterns within their community. Data are collected through prolonged and immersive observation, in-depth interviews with cultural members, and careful examination of documents or artifacts.

b) Case Study

A case study involves an in-depth investigation of an individual, a group, an organization, a program, or a particular situation at a specific time and place. The goal is to obtain a comprehensive and detailed description, which is then analyzed to develop theoretical insights. Data are collected through interviews, observations, and document reviews. A common example in the field of education is action research conducted by teachers to improve their professional practices. This is typically carried out qualitatively in a particular classroom over a certain period.

c) Document Study

Document study focuses on the analysis or interpretation of written materials in their contextual setting. These materials may include published records, textbooks, manuscripts, articles, newspapers, magazines, letters, films, diaries, and more. The credibility of such studies is determined by the authenticity of the documents being examined. This method is particularly useful for exploring a person's thoughts as expressed in written or published texts.

d) Natural Observation

Natural observation is a qualitative research approach in which researchers observe a particular setting in its entirety without altering any aspects of it. The primary aim is to understand how individuals or groups behave in specific situations. For example, it may be used to

observe how students interact with peers from different social backgrounds or how they behave in more homogeneous groups.

e) Phenomenology

Phenomenological research seeks to describe or uncover the meaning of concepts or lived experiences as perceived by several individuals. This approach is carried out in a natural setting without imposing limitations on the interpretation of the phenomena under study. In phenomenology, researchers suspend all prior judgments and assumptions until a clear understanding of the phenomenon emerges.

f) Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a qualitative research method used to develop theories grounded in natural data. This approach aims to generate or refine a theory related to specific social situations. These contexts typically involve interpersonal interactions, actions, or processes in response to particular events, and the theory emerges directly from the data collected during the study.

g) Historical Study

Historical research involves interpreting historical documents, artifacts, oral histories, and written records from the past, such as diaries, letters, newspapers, novels, cultural documents, census data, and more. Researchers investigate aspects of the past by analyzing documents or interviewing individuals (witnesses) who are alive today. The goal is to reconstruct past events as accurately as possible and to explain why those events occurred.

h) Biography

Biography, or life history research, is the study of an individual's life, focusing on key turning points and reciprocal moments throughout their personal journey. This type of research involves collecting and analyzing stories, documents, records, and oral narratives from the subject being studied. Biographical studies are useful in understanding events or social phenomena as they relate to the life experiences of the individual.

3. Qualitative Research Methods

a) Interview

The interview is one of the most commonly used techniques for collecting research

data. In simple terms, an interview is an event or a process of interaction between an interviewer and an informant through direct communication. It is essentially a face-to-face conversation in which the interviewer asks predetermined questions related to the research subject. However, inaccurate or unreliable data may result from poorly selected informants or inadequately constructed question sets that fail to reflect the research focus. A respectful and empathetic approach by the interviewer, recognizing the dignity and humanity of the interviewee, greatly enhances the quality and success of the interview process.

Although interviews are face-to-face conversations, they can be categorized based on the structure of the questions posed:

- 1) Structured interview - where all questions are predetermined and asked in a fixed order.
- 2) Unstructured interview - where questions emerge organically during the conversation.
- 3) Semi-structured or open interview - a hybrid of the two, allowing flexibility while maintaining some level of guidance.

b) Observation

While both interviews and document analysis are effective for capturing verbal behavior, they are limited in their ability to uncover non-verbal behavior and are often more suited for survey research. Observation, in contrast, is a technique that allows the researcher to examine non-verbal behaviors in a natural setting. Based on the role of the observer within the observed environment, observation can be categorized into two forms:

- 1) Participant observation - where the observer is actively involved in the daily activities of the group or community being studied.
- 2) Non-participant observation - where the observer does not engage in the activities and remains an outside viewer.

The effectiveness of observation as a data collection method largely depends on the skill of the observer, who must carefully see, hear, perceive, and interpret the research

subject before drawing conclusions from the observed phenomena.

c) Document Analysis

Documents are records or artifacts that capture past events. Documents relating to individuals, groups, or social events relevant to the research focus are invaluable sources of information in qualitative research. These documents may take the form of written texts, artifacts, images, or photographs. Written documents can include life histories, biographies, personal writings, and narratives. Cultural materials or artistic works also serve as important sources in qualitative studies, particularly in anthropology. These materials often contain rich values that reflect the context, era, and meaning of the time they were produced.

D. CONCLUSION

Qualitative research design is inherently flexible, allowing researchers to adapt and refine the research direction as the data collection process unfolds in the field. It encompasses various approaches, including case studies, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry.

There is a wide range of qualitative research types, each with distinct focuses and objectives. Choosing the appropriate type of research must align with the research problem, objectives, and the characteristics of the phenomenon under study.

Data collection methods in qualitative research include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The selection of these methods should consider the accessibility, validity, and reliability of the data obtained.

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