

Traditional Methods in Qualitative Research

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Introduction

- Along with providing scientific information on a particular topic, qualitative research also gives culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations.
- It also helps in analysing intangible factors like social norms, socio-economic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion.

Interviews

- This method can be formal or informal.
- The researcher can ask questions and study the responses (verbal and non-verbal) of the interviewee.
- It can be conducted through face-to-face mode or remotely through telephone, email and Skype.
- Eg: Personal interviews and telephone interviews

Types of Interviews

- **i) Structured Interview**
 - The interview is based around pre-determined questions that are always asked in the same order.
 - It also uses sophisticated tools for recording the interview which gives structure to the collection and analysis of the data.
- **ii) Semi-structured Interviews**
 - Though it also contains core set of questions, there is room for the interviewer to ask supplementary questions.
 - The researcher can also change the order in which the questions are asked.
- **iii) Unstructured/ Open-Ended Interview**
 - It is characterised by its flexibility in conducting the interview.
 - Modelled as free-flowing conversation, researcher can ask questions which are not prepared in advance and conduct it based on the responses of the interviewee.

Focus Group Discussions

- FGDs are facilitated discussions, held with a small group of people who have specialist knowledge or interest in a particular topic.
- Typically carried out with around 6-12 people, and are based around a short list of guiding questions, it is designed to probe for in-depth information.
- Questions are asked about their perceptions, ideas, beliefs, etc. with regard to a particular topic.
- It encourages discussion between group members.
- It is suitable while dealing with minority groups.

Observation

- It involves observing and formally recording events, relationships, objects, and processes.
- It is a type of participatory method as the researcher has to be involved in the process.

Different Types

- **i) Controlled Observation**

- It is carried out in a closed space.
- The researcher has the authority to decide the time and place, participants, and the phenomena to be observed.

- **ii) Naturalistic Observations**

- It involves observing and recording the spontaneous behaviour of the participants in open or natural surroundings.
- The researcher remains a distant observer throughout the process.

- **iii) Participant Observations**

- The researcher also immerses himself/herself into the group to be observed.
- Gains more in-depth insights.

Different Methods

- **i) Structured/ Direct Observation Method**
 - Observations are recorded against a pre-determined checklist.
- **ii) Unstructured Observation method**
 - It is conducted in a free and open manner without using any pre-determined objectives, schedules or variables.
- **iii) Expert Observation Method**
 - It is carried out by an expert in the particular area.
 - It involves the expert observing and recording information on a subject.

Case Study

- It is a descriptive method that provides in-depth information on a particular topic.
- The data is collected through different methods like interview, observation, etc.
- It focuses on people, location, organisations, policies or the environment.

Survey

- It aims to collect and record information from many people, groups or organisations in a consistent way.
- It is designed in such a way as to ensure that the survey is representative of the population under study.
- Uses standard questionnaire to ensure consistency in data collection.
- Method of analysis is determined based on the collected data so that adequate findings and results can be generated.

Questionnaire

- It is a form containing questions.
- Usually, questionnaire is sent/given to the persons concerned with a request to answer the questions and return the questionnaire.
- It maybe a printed form or the one designed as to be filled in online.
- It is mainly used as a data collection method in survey.

Types of Questions used in a Questionnaire

- **i) Open Questions**
 - The respondents are free to record their personal answers.
- **ii) Multiple Choice Questions**
 - Respondents are offered a set of answers they have to choose from.
- **iii) Dichotomous Questions**
 - It offers two options—mostly yes or no—to the respondents to choose from.
- **iv) Scaling/Ranking Questions**
 - Here, respondents can rank the answers to the questions on the scale of given range of values (for example from 1 to 10).

Content Analysis

- It refers to the "the systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter, not necessarily from an author's or user's perspective".
- It consists of analysing the contents of documentary materials like books, magazines, and newspapers.
- In general, it pertains to contents of all verbal materials which can be either spoken or printed.

Archival Research

- It involves primary sources held in archives, a special collections library, or other repositories.
- The materials include manuscripts, documents, records (including electronic records), objects, sound and audiovisual materials.
- Different types of archives—college and university archives, corporate archives, museums, government archives, historical societies, and special collections.

Ethnographic Method

- It refers to the study and interpretation of cultural behaviour.
- It is conducted through participant observation.
- The researcher immerses himself/herself in the community and makes field notes through observation.
- The collected data is later synthesised to create a written ethnographic account of that particular community.

Contemporary Methods in Qualitative Research

Introduction

- In the context of postmodernist skepticism of grand theories and metanarratives, researchers became reflexive about the power dynamics and the resultant subject/object relationships in the study.
- They also began to question the situatedness of the researcher and the population studied in the specific socio-political, cultural, and economic contexts.

Discourse Analysis

- It is concerned with the investigation of language, both written and oral, as it is actually used as opposed to an abstract entity.
- It treats language as value laden—every communicative processes constitute “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world both on the part of the producer (the writer, the speaker) and on the part of the consumer (the reader, the audience).”
- Hence, it refers both to a theory of language use and a method for analysing language in use.

Different Types of Discourse Analysis

- A. Conversation analysis and ethnomethodology
- B. Interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication
- C. Discursive psychology
- D. Critical discourse analysis and critical linguistics
- E. Bakhtinian research
- F. Foucauldian research

Quantitative Methods for English Studies

- Mostly employs computer-aided research techniques to study the politics of the use of numbers and the recurrence of certain words in the text.
- Two Types of Quantitative Methods:
- **Computational Methods**
- These include the computer-aided storage, retrieval, interrogation and analysis of texts.
- Eg: Computational linguistics
- These help in analysing both style and content of the texts.

- **Some uses:**
- Text retrieval and concordance programmes
- To count the number of occurrences of specific words
- To assist in indexing
- To retrieve (through concordance) particular words within the context of their accompanying phrase or sentence.
- To settle disputes about authorship
- Genre studies

- **ii) Statistical Methods**

- These involve the display and analysis of quantitative data like literary output, classifications of literature or readerships, or readership opinions from questionnaire or interview material.
- These also concern the analysis of plots or other content in narratives and can overlap with computational analysis.

Two Types

1) Descriptive Statistics

- Techniques employed to improve the communication and display of numerical information in an analytical context.

2) Inferential Statistics

- Techniques employed to interrogate possible meanings and implications of available data.

Digital Humanities

- These utilize various IT and internet enabled tools and techniques for textual analysis and other text based studies.
- **Common uses:**
 - Use of the internet for information seeking and dissemination.
 - Use of computational text mining and analysis techniques.
 - The ability to present and interrogate primary source materials in diverse technologically driven ways.
 - Use of large scale reference materials such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias.
 - Complex textual editing.
 - Use of hypertext in literary theory
 - Use of visual imaging and image enhancement
 - Use of databases and structured modelling techniques.
 - Use of digital resources and methods in teaching.
 - Studies of new media platforms and texts produced by these platform also use digital humanities.

Feminist Research Methods

- These propose solutions in criticism “for the development of sexist research theory and practice.”
- Along with studying the feminist concerns in texts, these also focus on the issues faced by women in academia.
- Study how women in academia are limited by social factors like gender, class, and sexuality compared to their male counterparts.

Internet-Mediated Research

- It is concerned with e-mail, chat rooms, discussion boards and other internet applications.
- How applications like Skype are giving new meanings to research methods that involve face to face interaction.

Decolonising Research Methods

- It addresses the Eurocentrism and existing power hierarchies in research methods and practices.
- Both scholars and the population/texts selected for the study are influenced by the colonial history and power relationships in a postcolonial/neocolonial world.
- Thus, decolonisation is an important strategy in addressing the epistemological value of indigenous knowledge systems and the position of researcher.

What should be highlighted

- **i) Exercising critical reflexivity**
- It enables the researchers to evaluate their preconceived notions, their situatedness with respect to the research and the inherent power dynamics.
- **ii) Reciprocity and respect for self-determination**
- Reciprocity considers consent as an ongoing process of negotiation where consent is continuously being asked for and granted at all stages of the research process.
- It establishes the study as a collaborative process from beginning to the end.
- It also helps in establishing collective ownership over the entire research process, the data analysis, and its dissemination.
- Self-determination addresses issues around consent and autonomous decision making of both the researcher and the participants.

- **iii) Embracing other(ed) ways of knowing**
- Acknowledging the epistemological value of community members' knowledge is an important step.
- **iv) Embodying a transformative praxis**
- Rather than an academic endeavour, research also involves the application/praxis of the knowledge gained through the study on a practical level.

Qualitative Disaster Research

- Analyses the social, political, economic and cultural impacts of climate change and environmental disasters.

Ethnodrama

- Coined by the anthropologist Victor Turner, it is a compound word made of 'ethnography' and 'drama'.
- It is an art-based research which includes the representational and presentational mode of ethnographic reporting chosen by the researcher or artist.
- It “consists of dramatized, significant selections of narrative collected through interviews, participant observation, field notes, journal entries and/or print and media artifacts.”
- It creates an immersive experience for the researchers and participants.

Narrative Theory and Academic Texts

- It reinvents the practice of scholarly writing in the postmodern contexts.
- It provides a framework for understanding both the research process and its products in new ways.
- It can be used to inform the decisions researchers make about their texts.
- It also offers specific tools and terms that researchers can use to consider the writing of qualitative texts, including the elements of story, character, focalization and plot.

Visual Research Methods

- Address the concerns and issues in a world largely dominated by visual modes of communication like social media, smart phones and video-sharing sites like YouTube.
- These comprise a collection of methods that incorporate visual elements such as maps, drawings, photographs, videos, as well as three-dimensional objects into the research process.

Participatory Action Research

- This method involves a group of people who are affected by some problem or issue and work together to find out a solution to the problem.
- It can contribute to the discovery and development of the conditions and actions for change that are sustainable.
- By emphasising democracy, equity, and liberation, it breaks down the old barriers between knowledge-producing and knowledge-consuming elites.
- It increases participant awareness of external forces affecting decisions in their lives.
- It enhances the self confidence and capacity to develop decisions that enable a new level of awareness and competence.
- Though historically associated with social transformation in the third world and human rights activism, now it expands to business, education, health, social care and community settings.

Deliberative Inquiry

- It emerged as a reaction to the lack of social relevance and application in rule-governed methodologies.
- As a collaborative research method, it is effective in facilitating the formation of a group opinion through a series of narrative cases and structured discussions.
- Both praxis and theory go hand in hand as it involves both a research component and a policy component.
- It is an effective method to collect data, as the group's deliberations allow participants to react to and build upon the responses of other group members.
- The success depends on the diversity, expertise and experience of the participants.

Qualitative Research Synthesis

- It enables researchers to summarize existing studies which make these informative to policy makers and practitioners.
- It also ensures the accessibility of the results to a wider audience.
- It seeks to answer a specific research question through combining qualitative studies that use thick description and that are located in generally the same tradition.

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