

Chapter 8

Case Study as a Method of Qualitative Research

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ABSTRACT

Qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts. When the approach is applied correctly, it becomes a valuable method for health science research to develop theory, evaluate programs, and develop interventions. The purpose of this chapter is to guide the novice researcher in identifying the key elements for designing and implementing qualitative case study research projects. An overview of the types of case study designs is provided along with general recommendations for writing the research questions, developing propositions, determining the “case” under study, binding the case, and a discussion of data sources and triangulation. To facilitate application of these principles, clear examples of research questions, study propositions, and the different types of case study designs are provided. The great contribution of qualitative research is the culturally specific and contextually rich data it produces. This is proving critical in the design of comprehensive solutions to general problems in developing countries.

INTRODUCTION

The qualitative vs quantitative research debate method is as old as the research itself. The researchers have definite differences on the utility of both the methods in different situations. Qualitative methods are now becoming popular in social sciences, development research, anthropology and social studies and particularly

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in the field economics. Quantitative research methods use to dominate these fields earlier but the social scientists have now started gaining from a bigger reservoir of methodologies as they tackle international economic and development related problems.

Qualitative methods emerged as important tools in the field of applied research largely because; they are providing valuable insights into the local perspectives, perceptions and thoughts of study populations. Qualitative methods are often contextual.

Qualitative research provides diverse data of different groups of population based on their perception about an event. We know that not only social problems but even political, economic and cultural-ethnic problems also have solutions hidden in society's values and beliefs. Data from social intervention is important in the design of comprehensive solutions to specific problems in developing countries. Social scientists, economists and political leaders have now come to recognize that economic or financial solutions are only partial remedies. Rather, the success of a new intervention like demonetisation or female reservation – that is, whether it actually reaches the people it is intended to help – rests also on how well it addresses socio-behavioural factors such as cultural norms, ethnic identities, economic diversity, gender norms, stigma, and socioeconomic status.

A popular method of qualitative research is the case study method (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1989) which examines in depth “purposive samples” to better understand a phenomenon hence, smaller but focused samples are more often used than large samples which may also be conducted by the same or related researchers or research centers. To help navigate the heterogeneous landscape of qualitative research, one can further think of qualitative inquiry in terms of ‘means’ and ‘orientation’ (Pernecky, 2016).

This particular chapter presents the case study¹ as a type of qualitative research. Its aim is to give a detailed description of a case study – its definition, some classifications, Evolution and comparison of case study with its counterparts and Implications for Practice in the form of several advantages and disadvantages – in order to provide a better understanding of this widely used type of qualitative approach.

Qualitative methods of research, as the name suggests, generally aim to understand the experiences and attitudes of citizens, or the community. These methods aim to answer questions about the ‘what’, ‘how’ or ‘why’ i.e. the qualitative connotations of a phenomenon rather than ‘how many’ or ‘how much’, which are answered by quantitative methods.

Qualitative methods are often appropriate if we want to know that how a community or individuals within it perceive a particular issue. If one wants to understand the perspectives of participants; or explore the meaning they give to the phenomena; or observe a process in depth then qualitative research methodology is appropriate. In

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