

Chapter 1

Becoming Familiar With Qualitative Research

Sheema Tarab

Aligarh Muslim University, India

ABSTRACT

Qualitative research is a field of study that deals with exploring, describing, and interpreting the innate quality of entities and the social processes. In the recent past, an extensive growth in qualitative field of research has been witnessed, particularly in the occupational settings. It is a dynamic and exhilarating area that seeks to explain the research observations by means of insights which are hard to produce with quantitative methods. Most of the work is concerned with developing a theory (i.e., an inductive way to find out new solutions or identify new questions related to social being). In this chapter, the author has targeted the segment which is mostly the students pursuing research courses or conducting empirical work; the faculties and the managers who are handling the diversity of the social beings at their workplaces, whose varied needs are persistently evolving, would be able to understand the notion of technique which is qualitative in nature. Certain studies conducted in past and present have also been illustrated to maintain the reader's interest.

INTRODUCTION

Humans are diverse and dynamic social beings. To understand this diversity a mechanical approach is not always suitable. This calls for a qualitative inquiry i.e. looking into it through subjective lens. In the recent past, an extensive growth in qualitative field of research has been witnessed, particularly in the occupational settings. At workplaces, there are issues, concerns, and situations which are

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complicated hence are extremely important to address. Since these revolve around humans, an angle is needed to peep into the matter through the perspective of the concerned. Qualitative inquiries seek to explain the research observations by means of insights which are hard to produce with quantitative methods. Qualitative research is exhilarating, flexible and multi-foci in nature. Despite of the growing popularity of this field and a large number of submissions, there is a low rate of publishable acceptability, reason being the fundamental methodology to pursue a qualitative research goes missing. Incorporating the theoretical knowledge into research work is a challenge to neophytes. The beginner has little knowledge about the concepts and application of different paradigms of existing qualitative methods, hence get confused. Thus, this gap creates an urgency to help those who are interested in beginning research work by means of qualitative methods. To overcome these concerns and limitations, a chapter highlighting the basic exposure of this genus is proposed here. It will serve the purpose of amplifying the basic conception of a qualitative inquiry. Both the novice and the experienced researchers can refer to this chapter while constructing a successful premise of a qualitative inquiry.

The target audience is mostly the students and scholars conducting empirical research work; also, the faculties and the managers who are handling the human diversity at their workplaces, whose varied needs are persistently evolving. The structure of this chapter is arranged in a simplified way. Remembering the words of Gephart (2004), the relationship of theory and methodology is important; the organization of the text has been composed in a way that reflects the linkage of all elements in the framework with one another. To assimilate the readers, discussion begun by mentioning about the field of study, and then moving to the need and emergence of qualitative inquiry talking about- why these types of studies are growing with the passage of time? One of the prime reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that its nature is exploratory (Mason, 2002). Meaning, not much literature is available about the subject or the inhabitants under observation, and the researcher has the scope to build a theory. This feature of novel exploration attracts the researchers to undertake such research inquiries and unfold different realities about the social processes. In an organizational setting, there are vast opportunities for an investigator to observe, explore and discover the interaction process of social beings, but it is challenging to decide upon the selection of a method to study. To explicate the concept of what qualitative inquiry is; what different paradigms and types of qualitative methods are? I have employed straightforward language and lucid illustrations (readers may use them for cross-reference), to simplify the description, and also have integrated some review questions to ensure that the reader's curiosity in the concept remains intact. In general, qualitative research has a long history in several disciplines, while particularly in organization settings qualitative methods is taking a hike, as it holds the capability to bring out an in-depth understanding of

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