

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN SOCIAL SCIENCES: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

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Abstract

We tried to understand how qualitative research approach functions in the social sciences research field? Explain the main theme of our study we mention some attributes of the qualitative research approach. We use a German word Geisteswissenschaften for decades attributes of the qualitative research approach in terms of humanity. The main findings of our study is no research work will viable or publicly accepts without humanness or Menschlichkeit and we suggest that a researcher have ethical values for doing a research work. Here we put a research design for making a good qualitative research. The design lies in Narrative or Grand Narrative, Phenomenology, Grounded theory and Case Study and follows some methods like participant observations, in-depth interviews and open ended discussions.

Keywords: *Geisteswissenschaften, Narrative or Grand Narrative, Phenomenology, Grounded theory and Case Study.*

What is research? Research refers to the inquiry, new information and critical explanations of a research problem through the logical and systematic ways, using a suitable methodology in a specific field of knowledge. A researcher chooses a research problem and frames a set of research questions from a context or perspective. Context refers to interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs and researcher has to choose a specific research problem from here. He or she collects data for addressing research problem as well as analyses, interprets the data for meeting, disposing research problem and produces result and draw a conclusion with some suggestions. The complications of a research work arises from the wrapped up of a research work. Why it occurs? Because a research work is an inquiry or treatise which completes in a systematic manner, through the proper techniques but many of time it is done by scattered methods. As a result the whole research work becomes in vain. This type of complications of research work is seen in social sciences field. Research works in social sciences is critical because major parts of the social sciences research are storytelling which makes narratives and shows a real picture of a society. The data which are collected from respondent are basically subjective and value laden in the social sciences research. A researcher telling a story as a narrative form on a set of research questions resulting the narratives have inconsistent in many a time. We prescribe the qualitative research approach for meeting the difficulties and analyses critically in the research of social sciences field. Why? Because a researcher's storytelling and narratives should qualify whereas his or her story telling is based on value laden so, the techniques of the qualitative research approach brings the researcher's work in a right track. We use the qualitative research approach for doing a research work in a systematic manner in social sciences. Human society not runs in mathematical calculations. So every event of the society cannot analyse in the quantitative fashions, so qualitative research approach will important tool in the social sciences research field.

Qualitative research approach is very important tools to understanding the socio-cultural reality in our society. The values of a society make country

prosperous and there are need to understand the values of a society critically. It analyses, manifests by using the methods of qualitative research approach in social sciences research. In this backdrop we may suggest the qualitative research approach for carry forwards the social sciences research in very systematic ways. So, our humble endeavour to discuss critically on the qualitative research approach as the tool of social science research in a research paper and it will our primary objective.

Review of Literature

There are large volumes of literature available in the social sciences research field. Here some literature basically of qualitative research approach will be reviewed out of the large volume of texts in social sciences research field. It has two reasons: a) we will gather a holistic knowledge of the qualitative research approach as a tool of the social sciences research; b) we will find a research gap in the field of the social sciences research through the literature surveys. The analysis of research approach is essential for better understanding of the research inquiries in social sciences research field. There are two basic approaches to the study of research works: a) the quantitative approach and b) the qualitative approach. The former involves the generation of data in quantitative form which can be subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis in a formal and rigid fashion. But the qualitative approach to research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour. Research in such a situation is a function of researcher's insights and impressions¹ (Kothari, 1985). Human activities cannot understand through the mathematical calculations in every time but their attitudes on a specific event should qualify in systematic manner and draw a general theory. It will be appropriate to made it clear the notion of research methods and research methodology. Research methods may be understood as all those methods/techniques that are used for conduction of research. Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically² (Kothari, 1985). We have gained knowledge on research methods and methodologies from the writings of

Kothari but mention one observation that is methodology refers to way of thinking.

Recent years have witnessed a significantly increased interest internationally in applying qualitative research methods to the study of social and cultural processes³ (Jensen, 1991). The qualitative research approach may be fruitful to manifest the socio-cultural flavours of a given society. In the words of Carey, the field thus has entered into a process of making large claims from small matters: studying particular rituals, poems, plays, conversations, songs, dances, theories, and myths and gingerly reaching out to the full relations within a culture or a total way of life⁴ (Carey, 1989). We can mention the human behaviour on a particular event can be elaborated in a logical manner and draw an image of social reality through the qualitative research approach in the social sciences research fields.

We will see the event of qualitative research approach turn into the most important research tool in the social sciences research field. The two different sets of historical circumstances have interacted to produce the qualitative turn: a) the growth in qualitative approaches is a product of factors internally in the scientific community. Many scholars and institutions have come to question the explanatory power of conventional empirical approaches within the social sciences. There appears to be an emerging consensus that a great many central research issues cannot be adequately examined through the kinds of questions that are posed by hypothetic-deductive methods and addressed with quantifiable answers⁵. b) The qualitative turn is the product of factors of social history that are external to science. If one accepts the lesson of history that scientific developments are, to a degree, interdependent with changes in the broader socioeconomic context, then qualitative approaches may be seen as a scientific means of coping with a new form of social reality, what has variously been called the post-industrial society, the postmodern age and the information society⁶ (Jensen, 1991). It indicates the qualitative research approach is one of the main tools of social sciences research field.

Rationale behind the Study

We gained knowledge on qualitative research approach in the field of the social sciences research from the brief literature survey. A researcher conducting and publishing qualitative research in the social science research requires the principal skills as used in the quantitative research. There may be special challenges for qualitative researchers because he or she considers and uses some techniques in a logical and systematic process for better understanding the socio-cultural phenomena in a given society. They may have to overcome prejudice and communication barriers within the scientific community⁷ (Stenius, Mäkelä, Miovský and Gabrhelík, 2017). We find a void place in the social sciences research from the study of existing literature on qualitative research approach. For this reason, there is ample opportunity of a researcher for addressing the qualitative research process as a tool socio-cultural research.

Research Design

A research work needs a unique research design through which a research problem will analyses, interprets and draws a report by scientific fashion. The qualitative research approach is not exception from this rule of action. We suggest here a research design of qualitative research approach for making of research activities carry forward properly. The design should lie in such a manner: a) Narrative or Grand Narrative, b) Phenomenology, c) Grounded theory and d) Case Study⁸. The first one refers to storytelling technique. A researcher telling a story of a specific social group through collection of data and draw an image of socio-cultural picture from a narrative. The activities should qualify in scientific manner though this work mainly subjective in nature. Phenomenology refers to studies of conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view⁹. So, a researcher's experience is very much fruitful for doing a research work in subjective manner. The third one is Grounded theory. It is a research tool which enables you to seek out and conceptualise the latent social patterns and structures of your area of interest through the process of constant comparison¹⁰ and the fourth research techniques is case study, which refers to choose a specific problem as a case of research which will be addressed and qualified in a proper civility. We put some methods of qualitative research work: participant observations, in-depth interviews and open ended discussions.

What is Qualitative Research Approach?

Qualitative research approach is the way of thinking of specific socio-cultural research activities through which a researcher makes his or her philosophical understanding of a particular research problem and stages a set of research questions which is properly addressed. It seeks to tell the story of a particular group's experiences in their own words, and is therefore focused on narrative¹¹. A researcher goes out for asking and answering research questions and getting some data from using different types of methods and techniques. The three most common qualitative methods, are participant observations, in-depth interviews, and open ended discussions which have been played critical role to gets data from the study area. Each method is particularly suited for obtaining a specific type of data. a) Participant observations appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviours in their usual contexts; b) In-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored. c) Open ended discussions of the respondents unfold the barriers of the collecting data and this method brings plenty of opportunity for a researcher to gather data from the study area. d) Focus groups are effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to the cultural groups or subgroups represented¹².

Qualitative Research and Quantitative Research

We have to compare two traditional research approach namely the qualitative and quantitative research

approach. Here we take two parameters for comparison in between two approaches although there are many other different parameters we have: a) conceptual and b) methodological. Conceptually the qualitative research approach concerned with understanding the human behaviour from the respondents perspective. Here predicts a dynamic and negotiable reality that's why the qualitative research is highly subjective. Positivism is the theoretical base of quantitative research approach, only sensory observation should be granted for formulating a research problem. Here the research work concerned with discovering facts about social attributes and assumes a fixed and measurable reality. From the methodological point of view a researcher collects the data and information through participant observations and interviews method in the qualitative research. Data analyses by themes from descriptions by informants and makes a report in the language of respondents. The quantitative researcher collects the data through measuring things and sensory objects. He or she analyses data through numerical comparisons and statistical inferences and prepares a report, dissertation or thesis through statistical analyses¹³. Human activities cannot measure through mathematical calculations and numerical estimations in all times. It is not possible to quantify the human value on different socio-cultural issues, because of that a researcher's very duty to observe the respondents' activities on the basis of his or her own cognitive convictions. Maybe it is highly earthy and fictile but it should be rational and methodical. Here, a real or tremendous challenge for a researcher who is doing research work in the using of qualitative research methods.

Attributes of Qualitative Research Approach

We begin to explore the attributes of qualitative research approach by looking into the knowledge gaining system in the social sciences research activities. Quantitative analysis would focus on the concrete, delimited products of the media's meaning production, qualitative approaches examine meaning production as a process which is contextualized and inextricably integrated with wider social and cultural practices. We invoke the classical German word *Geisteswissenschaften* or *Menschlichkeit* refers to humanity or humanness for exploring attributes of the qualitative research approach. The said German words is mentioning and decoding the real attributes of qualitative research approach to our better understanding of as to how an event will qualifies. The attributes of the qualitative research approach are: a) meaning, b) internal, c) occurrence, d) experience, e) *esegesi*, f) process¹⁴. A researcher should follows, precepts and appreciates of the actual meaning of the research problem rather than pay attention to the information. Through this work he or she can show competence of doing research work in a qualitative research expedient. A qualitative research work tries access to internal corner and penetrates the danger zones of a specific research problem. So, it is the second attributes of qualitative research approach. Qualitative analysis focuses on the occurrence of its analytical objects in a particular context, as opposed to

the recurrence of formally similar elements in different contexts¹⁵. One of the main attributes of the research approach is experience rather than experiments, that's why participatory observation is the important part of qualitative research approach. The fifth attributes of qualitative research approach is *esegesi*. It is an Italian a term, means an event should explains religiously because human understanding cannot measures geometrically in every time of our life. And the last attributes is all about process of a research work. The process in a research work should maintain contextualise paradigm with socio-cultural practices and it follows a holistic approach of a research activities.

Ethics and Qualitative Research

No research work can be viable without ethical value. Here is much more importance of qualitative research method because it deals with respondents behavioural patterns of livelihood and a researcher depends upon respondents won voice to collect data. A researcher must have ethical value for doing a research work using the tools of qualitative research approach. Whenever we conduct research on people, the well-being of research participants must be our top priority. The research question is always of secondary importance. This means that if a choice must be made between doing harm to a participant and doing harm to the research, it is the research that is sacrificed. Fortunately, choices of that magnitude rarely need to be made in qualitative research. But the principle must not be dismissed as irrelevant, or we can find ourselves making decisions that eventually bring us to the point where our work threatens to disrupt the lives of the people we are researching. A researcher has professional ethics also. Professional ethics deals with additional issues such as collaborative relationships among researchers, mentoring relationships, intellectual property, fabrication of data and plagiarism, among others. While we do not explicitly discuss professional ethics here, they are obviously as important for qualitative research as for any other endeavour. Most professional organizations have developed broad statements of professional ethics that are easily accessible via the Internet¹⁶.

Analysis and Interpretation

The qualitative research approach brings an opportunity to the researcher doing his or research activities as the subjective mode of interpretation and addressing the research problem scientifically in the social sciences research field. Interpretation refers to the task of drawing inferences from the collected facts after an experimental study. In fact, it is a search for broader meaning of research findings. The task of interpretation has two major aspects: a) the effort to establish continuity in research through linking the results of a given study with those of another and b) the establishment of some explanatory concepts¹⁷ (Kothari, 1985). The two things conjointly plays vital role in the interpretation works of a research activities. In one sense, interpretation is concerned with relationships within the collected data, partially overlapping analysis. Interpretation also extends beyond the data of the study to include the results of other research, theory

and hypotheses¹⁸ (Emory, 1976). Thus, interpretation is the device through which the factors that seem to explain what has been observed by researcher in the course of the study can be better understood and it also provides a theoretical conception which can serve as a guide for further researches.

Findings

We have tried to understand what qualitative research approach actually is and how qualitative research approach influences to the research activities in the social sciences research field? The qualitative research approach tends to excavate the core research area of social sciences subjectively but scientific manner in terms of logical and systematic observation of a research problem. The study has found different aspects of qualitative research approach which are depends each other: a) Qualitative research basically based on researchers own cognitive convictions. b) Qualitative research challenges to the researcher, because it tends to narrate a specific social research problem but he or she is not confined into the small periphery. c) Qualitative research wants to make a holistic philosophy on a particular social research problem. d) Social reality is not a single one so, researcher's perception varies to pursue social reality in qualitative research. e) The ethical questions are the most important part of qualitative research approach to the study of social sciences research forasmuch the researcher's interpretation of a social research problem is highly subjective. This finding tends to lead and better appreciation for the further research activities in the social sciences research fields on the way of qualitative research approach.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The qualitative research approach brings a general trend to carry forwards the social sciences research in terms of researcher's personal thinking instead of mere quantitative and numerical understanding of a specific social issue. It is open ended, that's why the researcher and respondents' own view and prudence conjointly shapes another conceptual framework of a social problem. Here we suggests some different things for the social research work to be better parleyed: a) the qualitative research works should logical and catenary; b) it requires pilot mode of studies, because, the pilot mode of studies works in small scale manner which will helps gradually completes the whole research work; c) it needs to develop the qualitative research techniques and skills; d) qualitative research work is time consuming, therefore time management is very essential for completion of social sciences research in the qualitative research process, e) qualitative research approach requires random sampling model as a tool of data collections because there are ample chance for biasness of social research. These suggestions will be fulfil the void places of the qualitative research approach to the study of social sciences research fields. We have great challenge in terms of as to what would be the best research approach to study of social sciences research. The positivist school of thought says only sensory perception should be viable to formulate a research problem and address the problem in that

methodological tool. A researcher of the social sciences has exhausted from the positivist way of thinking which is followed by quantitative research approach. They consider a research work will be spoiled which does not follow the positivist way of thinking or numerical measurements. But qualitative research approach has shifted the paradigm in the social sciences research work in terms of they ask how will be quantify the human values and which scale will measured self or group perceptions?

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