Qualitative research designs: - An overview of Phenomenology, Ethnography, Case-study, Narrative Enquiry and *Participation Action Research*

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What Is Qualitative Research?

An enquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of enquiry that explore a social or human problem.....researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell 2009: 15)

Seeks to answer difficult “why” questions
Explanatory and descriptive

Often used when just beginning to understand a phenomenon or if a new perspective is needed
What Is Qualitative Research?

- Phenomena studied in naturalistic settings
- Attempts to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them
- Used when attempting to understand the nature of a phenomenon
Naturalistic Settings

- The setting that people live in daily

- Important because qualitative researchers consider the context to be very important in understanding a phenomenon
Beliefs of Qualitative Researchers

- There are multiple realities
  - There are similarities and differences in every person’s experience

- Reality is socially constructed and context dependent
  - Meaning of an observation is defined by its circumstance or context
Qualitative Research

- Does NOT test interventions
- Seeks to understand the patient’s experience
- May provide information necessary to pursue quantitative studies
- May be used for theory development or extension
Qualitative research:

- Seeks to understand a phenomena
- Considers context as very important
- Uses purposive samples
- Collects data until saturation occurs
- Usually describes a process, a set of conditions, or an experience
- Identifies themes
Within qualitative research specific traditions or varieties are described and these include:

- A Biographical Study.
- A Phenomenological Study.
- A Grounded Theory Study.
- An Ethnographic Study.
- A Case Study
- Narrative Analyses
- Participant Action Research.
Biographical Study

The study of an individual and his/her experiences as told to the researcher or found in documents and archival material.

The studied use and collection of life-documents that describe turning point moments in an individual’s life.

Three sub-types of biographical studies exist: autobiography (not appropriate for doctoral work), life-history, oral history.
A process of learning and constructing the meaning of human experience through intensive dialogue with persons who are living the experience

The goal is to understand the meaning of the experience as it is lived by the participant—the lived experience

Meaning is pursued through a dialogic process
Phenomenology

- The researcher’s perspective is bracketed
- The researcher uses some strategy to identify personal biases about the phenomenon of interest to clarify how personal experience and beliefs may color what is heard and reported.
- Sampling is purposive
- The researcher seeks individuals who are either living or have lived the experience being studied
Two types of Phenomenological Enquiry are described

Descriptive Phenomenology – researcher explores the meanings “insiders” give to an experience and describes his/her discoveries in exact words without any attempt to interpret. (Husserl 1962).

Interpretative Phenomenology or Hermeneutics – researcher explores meanings and reported findings are interpreted by the researcher. (Heidegger 1962)
Phenomenology

- Data collection may consist of written or oral data
- Researcher may return to clarify a response
- Data saturation, when new themes are no longer emerging, guides the decision concerning the number of interviews needed
Phenomenology

- **Data analysis**
  - Thorough and sensitive readings of participants descriptions
  - Identification of shifts in participant thought and division into thought segments
  - Specification of significant phrases in each thought segment
  - Distillation of each significant phrase to express the central meaning
Phenomenology

- Data analysis—cont’d
  - Grouping together segments that contain similar central meanings
  - Preliminary synthesis of grouped segments focusing on the essence of the phenomena
  - Final synthesis of the essences that have surfaced in participant descriptions to produce an exhaustive description of the lived experience
Ethnography

- A description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system.
- Focuses on scientific description and interpretation of cultural or social groups and systems.
- Goal is to understand the native’s view of their world, or the emic view.
- The emic (insider’s) view is contrasted to the etic (outsider’s) view.
- Typically involves prolonged observation of the group, through participant observation in which the researcher is immersed and through interviews with group members.
Ethnography

- Identifying the phenomena
  - Interested in describing the world of the people being studied
  - Includes cultural, political, economic, institutional, and social-relational aspects.
  - Answers questions about how cultural knowledge, norms, values, and other contextual variables influence the health experience
Case Study

- In-depth investigations of a single entity or a small number of entities. May be an individual, family, group, institution or other social unit.
- An in-depth study of the peculiarities and commonalities of a single case – the “case” is centre-stage.
- May include quantitative or qualitative data or both.
- Four basic types of designs for case-studies: single case, holistic, single case embedded; multiple case holistic; & multiple case, embedded (Yin 2003)
Case-Study Types (Yin 2003)

Holistic Designs

The global nature of a case – be it individual, program, community or organization is examined.

Embedded Designs

Involve more than one unit of analysis. Attention is given to subunits. A wide variety of data can be used in case-studies including data from interviews, observations, documents and artifacts.
Participatory Action Research

- The goal of community based participatory research or participatory action research is a democratic process through which members of a group, often an oppressed group, identify a problem, collect and analyze data, and then formulate solutions to effect social or political transformation.
Participatory Action Research

The aim of this approach is not only about knowledge discovery but also about action and conscious raising.

The PAR tradition is based on seeking to empower participants through constructing and using knowledge.

Research methods take second place to emergent processes of collaboration and dialogue.
Participatory Action Research

- Participatory by nature: - collaboration between researchers & study participants in defining the problem, selection of an approach, research methods, analysis of data and how findings are utilised.

- Systematically accesses the voice of a community to plan context-appropriate action

- Involves members of a study population as active and equal participants, in all phases of the research project, to facilitate change

- Also called community-based action research.

Reference: Whyte (1990) and Morrison et al (2001)
Participatory Action Research

- Has three phases:
  - Look phase: getting to know stakeholders so that the problem is defined on their terms and the problem definition is reflective of the community context
  - Think phase: interpretation and analysis of what was learned in the look phase
  - Act phase: planning, implementing, and evaluating, based on information collected and interpreted in the other phases
Narrative Enquiry / Analyses.

- This approach focuses on “story” as the object of enquiry to determine how individuals make sense of events in their lives.

- Narratives are seen as a “cultural envelope” into which people pour their experiences and relate their importance to others (Riessman 1991).

- Basic view is that people most effectively make sense of their worlds & communicate these meanings by constructing, reconstructing and narration.
Narrative Analyses

Several methods for analysing stories: - some examples


Pentadic Dramatism (Burke 1969): - analysis focuses on the internal relationships and tensions of ‘act’, ‘scene’, ‘agent’, and ‘purpose’ to each other.
Historical Research

- Systematic approach for understanding the past through collection, organization, and critical appraisal of facts.
- Goal is to illuminate the past so that it can guide the present and the future.
- The research question is often implicit in the phenomena being studied.

