

MODULE 2: LEARNING

Learning & Having Fun with Research Methods

Lesson 7: Qualitative Methods

Guiding Questions

- What qualitative methods could you use for your study?

Common qualitative methods include observations, one-on-one interviews, focus groups, case studies, diaries, or open-ended questionnaires. Your decision to use specific methods will most likely be determined by a) feasibility and b) time. In regard to feasibility, you want to find the method that is feasible for your context, meaning one that it possible to conduct within your work/study setting. For example, will you be allowed to conduct interviews with big CEOs? Will you, and they, have time? If you decide to do one-on-one interviews, how many will you be able to conduct given your time frame? If one-on-one interviews are not practical (knowing that they can be very time-consuming), perhaps you conduct a focus group instead to get many responses in one time.

One common qualitative approach is phenomenology. Essentially, phenomenologists aim to understand how people make sense of and interpret the world around them (Trochim, 2006).

Procedures for Conducting Phenomenological Research:

1. Researcher determines whether research problem is most suitable using the phenomenological approach.
2. A phenomenon of interest to study is identified.
3. The researcher recognizes and specifies the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology.
4. Data is collected from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, ie. interviews.
5. The participants are asked two main questions: What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon? The aim of these questions is to gather a textual and structural description of the experiences and gain a deeper understanding of the common experiences of the participants.
6. Phenomenological data analysis
 - a. Horizontalization: Highlighting significant statements, sentences, or quotes that illuminate how participants experience a phenomenon.
 - b. Clusters of meaning are developed from the significant statements into themes.
7. Using the significant statements and themes, a textual description of what the participants experienced is written. An imaginative variation or structural description is also written, describing the setting or context that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon.

8. From the written descriptions, the researcher writes a composite description that presents the “essence” of the phenomenon, which is called the essential, invariant structure (Creswell, 2013).

References:

Creswell, J.W. (2013). Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches. Five Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry. Retrieved from http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/13421_Chapter4.pdf

Trochim, W.M.K. (2006). Qualitative Measures. Research Methods Knowledge Base. Retrieved from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qual.php>

Examples of Research Projects

Title	Approach	Methodology
<i>How do financial advice services market to the 'youth market'?</i>	Positivistic approach	Cross-sectional study
<i>Impact of developments in IT on financial services</i>	Positivistic approach	Cross –sectional study & in-depth survey of one company
<i>Disability awareness training within leisure organisations</i>	Phenomenological approach	Participant observation
<i>Age discrimination in the workplace</i>	Positivistic and phenomenological approaches/feminist perspectives	Survey & case study
<i>Personality Testing: is this a valid tool in the recruitment and selection process?</i>	Both positivistic and phenomenological approaches	Survey & Participant observation
<i>Impact of in-store marketing campaign</i>	Both positivistic and phenomenological approaches	Participant observation and survey

(Neville, 2007, p11)