RESEARCH
METHODS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

Edited by: Ayodele Jimoh

Chapter Nine

Data Analysis - Qualitative Methods

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Introduction

Methodology is concerned with the ways in which research is carried out, i.e., its structure and process, as well as with the way in which the data gathered are analysed. The two approaches to research are:

- Quantitative, which is based on the methods used in the natural sciences; and
- Qualitative, this is based on methods which are said to be humanistic.

What is Qualitative Research?

Qualitative research, as defined in Wikipedia, is a method of inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social sciences, but also in market research and further contexts. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour. The qualitative method investigates the *why* and *how* of decision making, not just *what, where, when*. Hence, smaller but focused samples are more often used than large samples.

In the conventional view, qualitative methods produce information only on the particular cases studied, and any more general conclusions are only propositions (http://www.qsrinternational.com/what-is-qualitative-research.aspx). Hence, it is seen in its most basic form to involve the analysis of any unstructured data, including: open-ended survey, literature reviews, audio recordings, videos, pictures, social media and web pages.

Meaning of Qualitative Data

Qualitative data are information in non-numeric form; they are usually in textual or narrative format. According to Ogunbameru (2003) qualitative research is the unstructured, primarily exploratory methodology based on small sample intended to provide insight and understanding to social phenomenon. Qualitative research also involves the systematic use of variety of empirical materials such as case study, personal experience, introspective, life history, interview, observational, historical, visual texts e.t.c., to that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individual or group life. There are a number of reasons why a researcher may choose to adopt qualitative research method to obtain necessary information. Some of the reasons include: sensitive information, to observe subconscious feeling, complex phenomena, and holistic dimension. Nastasi & Schensul (2005) noted that qualitative research is essential for *documenting the adaptations necessary for application of interventions to real-life contexts and for identifying core intervention components which are related todesired outcomes. Furthermore, qualitative methods can help researchers to describe various manifestations of intended outcomes that may not be reflected in*

standardised instruments and to identify unintended positive or negative outcomes for the individual and institution/community (p. 187).

Advantages of Qualitative Data

Qualitative data have a number of advantages that make it a unique method of gathering and analysing data especially in the social sciences. Some of the advantages include:

- Greater awareness of the perspectives of programme participants (or product users). Most of the time the research setting provide natural occurring information, that allow researcher to understand in great detail, the phenomenon or programme.
- Awareness of time and history. Qualitative data are often collected over a long period, allowing for longitudinal analysis of historical, institutional, psychological and social process (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).
- Sensitivity to the influence of context. Miles & Huberman (1994) explain that qualitative data often contain some inherent "richness and holism, with strong potential for revealing complexity, which yield thick rich descriptive thatn are contextualised".
- Ability to "enter the programme scene" without contrived preconceptions. It is a more fluid approach to finding out "what's happening". Qualitative data are usually collected in close proximity to the specific situation, especially through direct observation or interview which allows local content to be taken into account.
- Alertness to unanticipated and unplanned events. There are certain phenomena that are not part of what the researcher planned for, but may surface during the research; such occurrence must be properly taken care of.

From the above it can be observed that the importance of qualitative research as a method of gathering information cannot be over-emphasised.

Methods of Gathering Qualitative Data

Data collection approaches for qualitative research usually involves:

- Direct interaction with individuals on a one-to-one basis, or
- Direct interaction with individuals in a group setting

The benefits of the qualitative approach are that the information is richer and has a deeper insight into the phenomenon under study. There are many ways of gathering qualitative data, but the important ones in social sciences include, Focus group discussion, In-Depth Interview, Observation and Textual Material or Documentary (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus group discussion is a form of structured group discussion involving people with knowledge and interest in a particular topic or issue with the presence of a moderator. Liamputtong (2009) opined that the primary aim of a focus group is to gain an understanding of a specific issue from the perspectives of selected members of the group. According to Morgan (2002) there are two broad types of focus groups: A structured approach which is employed more in market research and a less rigid and structured approach which is employed more in social sciences. A focus group discussion usually consists of seven to twelve people led by a moderator in a loosely structured discussion of various topics of interest. The course of the discussion is usually planned in advance and most moderators rely on an outline or a moderator's guide, to ensure that all topics of interest are adequately covered.

In-depth Interview

In-depth Interview is a useful qualitative data collection technique that can be used for a variety of purpose. It involves conducting intensive personal interview in which a single respondent probed by a highly skilled interviewer try to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a topic. In-depth interview offer the opportunity to capture rich, descriptive data about people's behaviour, attitude and perceptions, and unfolding process. According to Charmaz (2007), an intensive interview permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic with a person who has had the relevant experience. The process can last between thirty minutes and one hour.

Methods for recording interviews for documentation and later analysis include audiotape recording, videotape recording and note taking. In-depth interview has a number of advantages, (i) it provides detailed information, (ii) information obtained is comparatively accurate, and (iii) personal and intimate topics can be discussed freely once the interviewer develops a good personal rapport with the interviewee. Despite these advantages, it is difficult to generalise information obtained from this source because it is not standardised. There is also the problem of bias and time wasting.

Observation Method

The Oxford Dictionary defines observation as "accurate watching and noting of phenomena as they occur in nature with regards to cause and effect of mutual relations" Observation can be regarded as a research technique in which the behaviour of research subjects is watched and recorded without any direct contact or interaction. According to Cohen, et al., (2005), observation data are attractive as they afford the researcher the opportunity to gather 'live' data from 'live' situations.

In Social Sciences, there are two types of observation methods: participant and non-participant. In participant observation, the investigator enters into the research setting and participates in ongoing activities and records observations. According to Ogunbameru (2003), participant observation is not about going native but it is about immersing oneself in a culture and learning to rove oneself everyday from that immersion in order to intellectualise what has been observed and heard and put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly. The second one is the non-participant observation, this occurs where the investigator observes or watches the activities of the research subjects without intruding or participating in the activities. The researcher collects his information or data and records without becoming an integral part of the organisation system. The major advantage of observation method is that behaviour takes place in its natural environment and it can be observed and recorded as they unfold. One of the disadvantages is that in a natural environment, the researcher often has little control over extraneous variables that may affect the data.

Document Analysis

Documents contain text (words) and images that have been recorded without a researcher's purpose. Atkinson & Coffey (1997) refer to documents as 'social facts' which are produced, shared and used in socially organised way. A document is something that can be read and which relates to some aspects of the social world. As a research method, document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case study, with intensive study, it normally produces rich description of the phenomenon. Sources of document include public records, the media, private papers, biography, visual documents, historical records and photography.

There are some important criteria for assessing the quality of the evidence available from a documentary source. (a) Authenticity: there are ways for assessing a document's authenticity, the document may contain obvious error or it is not consistent in its representation. Another way is when there are so many versions of the same document. (b) Credibility: this refers to the extent to which the evidence is undistorted, sincere and free from error. (C) Representativeness: this deals with the issue of whether the document is in line with the aim of the research. (d) Meaning: this refers to the clarity and comprehensibility of the document.

How to Analyse Qualitative Data

The essence of gathering data, either quantitative or qualitative data is to analyse, interpret and bring out meaning from the data generated. A number of scholars have given various definitions to what they understand as qualitative analysis. Hsieh & Shannon (2005) define qualitative data analysis as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. Patton (2002) describes it as any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meaning. Hatch (2002), gives a broad definition by describing data analysis as a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organising and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorisation, hypothesising, comparison, and pattern finding. It always involves what Wolcott calls "mindwork". Researchers always engage their own intellectual capacities to make sense of qualitative data.

In order to achieve a good analysis of qualitative data, there are a number of steps that must be considered. Some of these steps according to Lacey and Luff (2009) include familiarisation with the data, transcription, anonymising of sensitive data, coding and re-coding, categorisation, examination of relationships and report writing. Although, the procedure may not follow the outline sequence, each of these steps will be discussed as follows.

1. Familiarisation with the Data

Qualitative data are very good in answering the 'why', 'what' and 'how' questions. The first thing a researcher needs to do after collection of the data is to get acquitted with the data through review, reading and in the case of audiotape, listening several times to the raw data in order to be familiar with and understand the data very well.

2. Transcribing your Data

Transcription is a specific kind of data entry that means turning oral language into a written form. This means listening to an audiotape or video recording and then typing it as a written transcript.

3. Anonymising of Sensitive Sata

During review of qualitative data, there are chances that the researcher comes across sensitive data that might be implicative or certain kind of sensitive information about the respondent, e.g., the health condition of the respondent, the responsibility is on the researcher to depersonalise such data. Anonymisation is a valuable tool that allows data to be shared and transferred.

4. Coding of Data

This is also known as indexing of data. Saldana (2009) defines coding as the process of organising and sorting of data. Code serves as a way to label, compile and organise data. It allows the researcher to summarise and synthesise what is happening in the data. It involves assigning words, phrase, number or symbols to each coding categorised. According to Kelle & Kluge (1999), a good code should be sufficiently precise, it should enable a large part of the data material to be subsumed under it and it should be relevant to the research question. They went further to explain that coding involves (1) indexing of textual units: (2) synopsis of all textual units which have certain categories and possibly other characteristics in common and lastly, (3) identification of structure and patterns in the data material which can lead to new categories and sub-categories. For example, a general code might be 'education' which could be used to identify data that are relevant to education; a more specific code might be 'higher education' which could be used because the data refers to improving the quality of higher education.

5. Re-coding

It is important to note that as data are coded, the coding scheme will need to be refined. This means that the researcher will need to add, collapse, expand and revise the coding categories. Engaging in re-coding bring about developed and well-defined categories.

6. Categorisation

According to Boyatzis (1998), categorisation involves five main elements which include (1) the label e.g name; (2) a definition of what the theme concerns; (3) a description of how to know when the theme occurs; (4) a description of any qualification or exclusions to the identification of the theme; and (5) a listing of examples of positive and negative to eliminate confusion.

7. Examination of Relationships and Displaying Data

Examining relationship is the center piece of the analytic process, because it allows the researcher to move from simple description of the people and the setting to explanation of why things happen as they do with those in the setting. The process of examining relationship can be captured in a matrix that shows how different concepts are connected or perhaps what causes are linked with the effects. The relationships that are identified can be examined and be extended to create a more complex casual model.

8. Interpret the Data

Interpretation involves attaching meaning and significance to your data. Start by making a list of key themes. Revisit your review notes to factor in your initial response to the data. Review each theme that arose during the coding process and identify similarities and differences in responses from participant with differing characteristics. Also, consider the relationships between themes to determine how they are connected. Determine what new lessons you have learnt about your programme and how those lessons can be applied to different parts of the programme.

9. Report Writing

In reporting findings from qualitative data, the researcher needs to summarise key themes using selected quotes to illustrate findings. There are many approaches through which qualitative data can be summarised and analysed. Marriam (1998) notes that findings may be presented in different levels of analysis, such as organised, descriptive account, themes found repeatedly throughout the data, or as models or theories that explain the data.

Approaches to Qualitative Analysis

There are many approaches that a researcher can employ to analyse qualitative data generated from the research setting after going through some or all the steps already discussed, but to a large extent, the approach employed is usually influenced by the aim and objective of the study and the type of data to be analysed. For instance, Marriam (1998) discusses several approaches to analysing qualitative data. These include ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis and constant comparative method. In the same vein, Bernard (1994) also suggests several approaches to qualitative data analysis. These include hermeneutics or interpretative analysis, narrative and performance analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory analysis, content analysis, and cross-cultural analysis. There is the need to discuss some of these approaches in detail.

Grounded Theory Analysis

Bernard (1994) describes grounded theory as "a set of techniques for (1) identifying categories and concepts that emerge from text and (2) linking the concepts into substantive and formal theories" (p. 443). Grounded theory evolved out of research conducted by Sociologists Glaser & Strauss in 1967. Their main concern was to outline an inductive method of qualitative research, which would allow social theory to be generated systematically from data. In simple language, grounded theory is a methodology or a way of thinking about and conceptualising data. It is a means of developing theory from rigorous empirical research, rather than produced theory in abstract. According to Strauss & Corbin (1998), what distinguishes grounded theory from many other approaches to qualitative analysis is its emphasis on theory as the final output of the research. To them, a grounded theory consists of 'plausible relationship' among concepts, which are directly developed from data analysis. Theory in this sense provides a set of testable propositions that help researchers to understand the social world more clearly.

Ethnographic Analysis

Ethnographic analysis involves identifying categories related to a culture's economy, demographics, human life, particularly family, education and health care issues (Marriam, 1998). Ethnography is the study of a culture or cultures that a group of people share. It is commonly studied through the process of participant observation by a single investigator who immerses himself or herself in the group for a long period of time, gradually establishing trust and experiencing the social world of the people (Madden, 2010). There is no particular methodological analysis associated with ethnography. The analytical process according to Armstrong (2008) relies on "being there" the thoroughness and insight of the research to "tell us like it is" in the setting, as he or she experienced it. A good ethnography is only possible when the researcher learns how to speak the local language in order to understand expression used in the group or community and the multiple meaning that can be given to a single statement. Good ethnographies also include some reflections by the researcher on the influence his or her background has had on research plan, as well as on the impact of the research in the setting (Madden, 2010).

Semiotics Analysis

Semiotics is primarily concerned with the analysis of signs and symbols and their meaning. A sign or symbol is something that can stand for something else. This is mostly used in marketing and consumer research because of the importance of signs in marketing communication. e.g. brand names, logos and advertisement.

Hermeneutics or Interpretative Analysis

In hermeneutics or interpretative analysis, the researcher continually interprets the words of the texts to understand their meaning and their directives. Patton (2002) explains that interpretative analysis go beyond description, but interpretative involves attaching significance to what was found, making sense of finding, offering explanation, drawing conclusion, extrapolating lessons and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely pattern world.

Discourse Analysis

This involves looking closely at how people interact with each other. The word discourse refers to communication that goes back and forth, like an argument or debate. All language can be treated as a social interaction because there is always a speaker/writer or a listener/reader, but discourse analysis focuses mostly on language in use (Gee, 2010). In other words, discourse analysis is concerned with actual instances of language as used in communication. It encourages multiple readings and interpretation of text.

Phenomenological Analysis

This includes an epochal approach, which involves laying out one's assumption about phenomena under study, bracketing, imaginative variation that looks at the phenomenon in various ways (Marriam, 1998). Phenomenology describes the meaning of experience. The goal of the analysis is to seek the central underlying meaning or the universal essence of some experience. The main focus is on the description of the experience of people rather than an explanation or analysis of the experience. In other words, the research attempts to interpret data from the perspective of the participant.

Content Analysis

This is mostly used for analysing document source of qualitative data. It can be used to develop categories of words and phrases. Content analysis can reveal frequency of words or phrase and be used for historical trend, e.g., feminism in women magazine over the last ten years.

Conversation Analysis

This looks at the use of language by people as a type of action or as a skill accomplishment by competitors. A key concept within conversation analysis is the idea of the speaking turn. The principle of turn-taking in speech is claimed to be a universal feature of all conversation. It does not presume the existence of fixed meaning in words and idioms, meaning are shaped in the context of the exchange of conversation. Silverman (2005) concludes that it is through conversation that we conduct the ordinary affairs of our lives, our relationships with one another, and our sense of who we are to another is generated, manifested, maintained and managed in and through our conversation, whether face-to-face, on the telephone or other electronics means.

Narrative Analysis

This focuses on "the story itself" and seeks to preserve the integrity of personal biographies or a series of events that cannot adequately be understood in terms of their discrete elements (Riessman, 2002). Narrative analysis is a kind of spoken or written account of connected events such as a story. Traditionally, a narrative requires a plot, as well as some coherence and sequence. It usually has a linear structure, with beginning, middle and end. In narrative analysis, the coding strategy revolves around reading the stories and classifying them according to general pattern.

Other Methods

Other methods of data analysis as used in qualitative research include *Typology* (Creation of a system of classification or categorisation); *Taxonomy* (Essentially a typology with multiple levels of concepts); *Induction* (Formation of hypothesis about event, then compare to similar event to verify/falsify/modify hypothesis. Eventually central/general hypothesis will emerge); *Matrix/Logical Analysis* (Predominantly use of flow charts and diagrams); *Quantitative/Quasi-Statistics* (Count numbers of events/mentionings, mainly used to support categories); *Event (Frame) Analysis* (Identify specific boundaries (start, end) of events, then event phases); *Metaphorical Analysis* (Develop specific metaphors for event, also by asking participants for spontaneous metaphors/comparisons); *Domain Analysis* (Focus on cultural context, describe social situation and cultural patterns within it, semantic relationships)

Computer Support for Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is usually supported by computer programmes such as NVIVO or ATLAS.ti. (Polland, 1995). The programmes vary in their complexity and sophistication, but the common purpose is to assist researcher in organising, managing, and coding qualitative data in a more efficient way. According to Miles & Huberman, (1994) computer software package can assist the researcher in the following ways:

(1) Data Storage and Management: Software package will allow you to enter your raw data directly into the package and hold your documents securely.

(2) Data Searching and Retrieval: All packages can search textual data for particular words or phrases and can be used for frequency of certain words for content analysis.

(3) Coding: The process of coding and re-cording is made simple by using computer package; some part of the data can be highlighted and assigned to a pre-existing or new code in a matter of seconds.

(4) Developing and Texting Theory: Computer will enable relationship between coded data to be explored and displaced. For instance, One of the most popular systems (NVIVO) uses a hierarchical system which takes a "top down' approach, dividing and subdividing major concepts into their constituent elements. This may be ideal for a policy oriented approach such as framework analysis but may be less useful for grounded theory.

(5) Writing Reports. The software package will produce reports as requested by the researcher, e.g., printing out the entire data or just a section of it.

Challenges of Qualitative Data Analysis

There are many challenges that normally confront a researcher that engages the qualitative method in gathering data and using qualitative methods in analysing the data collected from the field. Some of the challenges include:

(1) Getting others to value and accept the qualitatitive data collected. Many researchers find it difficult to convince their colleagues that the data collected are authentic, reliable and can be analysed.

(2) Subjectivity: One of the hall-marks of qualitative research is also one of its major flaws. The subjective nature of the information that can be collected from such methods as interview and case study means that they are open to misinterpretation and observer bias. Subjectivity is also an issue when analysing data, because in qualitative research, data must

be interpreted. Researchers could unwittingly interpret the data in a way that suggests what they wish to show. For instance, Polland (1995) discusses at length some of the issues that can interfere with the accuracy of transcribed data. Transcribers often have difficulties capturing the spoken words in text form because of sentences, structure, use of quotation, omission and mistaking words or phrases for others. So, since interpretation is subjective, the findings can be interpreted differently by different stakeholders.

(3) No generalisation: Because the analysis is based on a relative small sample size and the subjective nature of qualitative data and the level of detail that is normally involved, it is very difficult to make generalisations to the whole population. So, results from qualitative data are most of the time only applied to the population sample.

(4) Time Factor: Analysis of qualitative data can be time consuming and labour intensive. It takes a lot of time and serious work to reduce a massive of audio or video material into a reasonable and meaningful size.

Qualitative Compared with Quantitative Data Analysis

There are many ways in which qualitative data analysis differs from quantitative analysis. Each difference reflects the qualitative data analysts' orientation to in-depth, comprehensive understanding in which the analyst is an active participant as compared to the quantitative data analysts' role as a dispassionate investigator of specific relations among discrete variables: Some of the areas of differences include:

- A focus on meanings rather than on quantifiable phenomena.
- Collection of many data on a few cases rather than few data on many cases.

- Study in-depth and detail, without predetermined categories or directions rather than emphasis on analysis and categories determined in advance.
- Conception of the researcher as an "instrument," rather than as the designer of objective instruments to measure particular variables.
- Sensitivity to context rather than seeking universal generalisations.
- Attention to the impact of the researcher's and others' values on the course of the analysis rather than presuming the possibility of value-free inquiry.
- A goal of rich descriptions of the world rather than measurement of specific variables.

One will also want to keep in mind features of qualitative data analysis that are shared with those of quantitative data analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis can involve making distinctions about textual data. You also know that textual data can be transposed to quantitative data through a process of categorisation and counting. Some qualitative analysts also share with quantitative researchers a positivist goal of describing better the world as it "really" is, although others have adopted a postmodern goal of trying to understand how different people see and make sense of the world, without believing that there is any "correct" description.

Ethics in Qualitative Analysis

Humberman (1994) raises a number of questions relating to ethics in qualitative analysis and suggests ways of dealing with the problems. Some of the ethical questions are discussed as follows:

(1) Privacy, Confidentiality and Anonymity. "In what ways will the study, intrude, come closer to people than they want? How

will information be guided? How identifiable are the individuals and organisation studied". Huberman (1994) is of opinion that, it can be difficult to present a rich description in a case study while at the same time not identifying the setting. So, qualitative researcher should negotiate with participant early in the study the approach that will be taken to protect the privacy and maintain confidentiality of the participants. Selected participants can be asked to review reports before their public release to gauge the extent to which they feel privacy has been appropriately preserved.

(2) Intervention and Advocacy. "What do I do when I see harmful, illegal or wrongful behaviour on the part of others during the study? Should I speak for anyone's interest beside my own? If so, whose interest do I advocate"? Maintaining what is called guilty knowledge may force the researcher to suppress some parts of the analysis so as not to disclose the wrongful behaviour, but presenting what really happens in a report may prevent ongoing access and violate understanding with participant.

(3) Research Integrity and Quality. "Is my study being conducted carefully and correctly in terms of some reasonable set of standard?" Real analyses have real consequences, so you own it to yourself and those you study to adhere strictly to the analysis methods that you believe will produce authentic and valid conclusion.

(4) Ownership of Data and Conclusion. "Who owns my field notes and analysis, I, my organisation or my funder? And once my reports are written, who controls their diffusion"? These concerns always arise in any social research project, but the intimate involvement of qualitative researcher with the participant in setting studied makes conflicts of interest between stakeholders much more difficult to resolve. So, it is advisable to work through issues as they arise.

(5) Use and Misuse of Result. "Do I have the obligation to ensure that my findings are used appropriately? What if they are used harmfully or wrongly?" It is prudent to develop understanding early in the project with all major stakeholders that specify what actions will be taken to encourage appropriate use of project results and to respond to what is considered misuse of these results.

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