

Qualitative Research

Simply Explained



Prepared by Med Kharbach, PhD
www.educatorstechnology.com

Key Characteristics

(Based on Merriam, 2009)

Merriam Sharan
(2009)

“

“Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed—that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world.” (p. 13)

Definition

Denzin & Lincoln
(2005)

“

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world... qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (p. 3 as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 13)

Van Maanen
(1979)

“

“Qualitative research is an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.” (p. 520 as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 13)

Focus on Meaning

Seeks to understand how people interpret and make sense of their experiences.

Researcher as Instrument

The researcher is the main tool for data collection and interpretation.

- Flexible and evolving design
- Purposeful, small samples
- Natural setting as the research site
- Requires skills in observation, questioning, writing, and handling ambiguity

Inductive Approach

Builds theory from the ground up through data-driven analysis.

Rich Description

Presents findings in detailed, narrative form using quotes, context, and thick description.

“The key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants’ perspectives.” (Merriam, 2009, p. 14)

Additional Features

Methods of Qualitative Research

(Based on Newman & Benz, 1998)

Interviews



Open-ended conversations that explore participants' experiences and meanings.

Participant Observation



Immersive fieldwork capturing real-life behavior and context.

Document & Text Analysis



Examination of records, letters, case files, and written materials for deeper insight.

Visual Methods



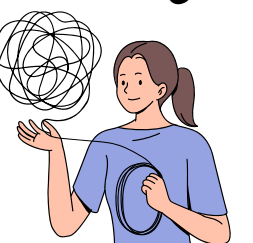
Use of photos, videos, and visual artifacts to support interpretation.

Case Studies



In-depth analysis of a specific case within its real-world context.

Grounded Theory



Data-driven theory building: observe first, theorize later.

Philosophical Foundation

(Based on Merriam, 2009)

Ontology (Nature of Reality)

Reality is socially constructed, multiple, and context-dependent.

Related Traditions

- Phenomenology: Experience as lived and felt
- Symbolic Interactionism: Meaning through social interaction
- Social Constructivism: Knowledge is shaped by context and history

(Based on Merriam, 2009)



Epistemology (Nature of Knowledge)

- Knowledge is co-constructed between researcher and participants.
- Meaning is shaped by culture, history, and interaction.

Interpretive Paradigm (Core Orientation)

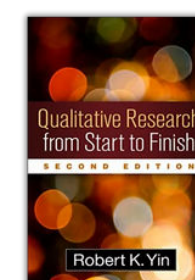
- Focus on understanding lived experiences and the meaning people give to them.
- Emphasizes context, subjectivity, and perspective.

Key Readings

Research Design
John Creswell



Qualitative Research from Start to Finish, by Robert K. Yin



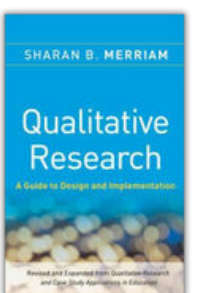
The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin et al



Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach, by Joseph A. Maxwell



Qualitative research : a guide to design and implementation, Merriam Sharan



Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical & Methodological, by Sharon et al

