

Personal Observations on Qualitative Research Data Collection and Publications: Positivity, Problems, and Challenges

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Abstract

The study intends to write the viewpoint based on the author's research experience in dealing with his PhD journey and several projects' data collection. Specifically, this paper aims to outline the personal observations of the researcher in qualitative research and publications highlighting the positivity, problems, and challenges. The argument draws upon personal experience and observations on the contemporary debates about qualitative research data collection in the context of Bangladesh and publication among academicians and researchers. It is not easy to collect data in qualitative research. Respondents are not interested in spending their time as they are concerned about their time, potential risk, and any uncertain difficulties. In addition, they do not understand the benefits of the research and their benefits. They ask about the potential benefits and problems if they participate in the data collection. Some of the respondents are aware of their institutional problems. They try to raise their voice to solve the issue and for the betterment of the industry. Moreover, some of the respondents are very flexible and openhearted in providing the responses and welcoming the research. Some of the editors and reviewers are more flexible in qualitative research and some are not interested in qualitative research. Thus, selecting a good journal makes it difficult to publish qualitative research papers. The paper is the perceptions of the author's data collection experiences and research publications.

Keywords: Qualitative Research, Data Collection, Publications, Positivity, Problems

1. INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research is better suited for comprehending the true nature of human interactions, meanings, and procedures that create actual organizational settings since it is more likely to depict and investigate social concerns than social structures. In addition to examining the "why" and "how" of a phenomenon in greater detail, qualitative research and case studies may also investigate the "what" questions (Alam, 2021). The goal of qualitative research is to collect as much information as possible from a limited sample size. Compared to quantitative research, this method is more adaptable because it allows participants to express themselves while contributing data.

However, researchers faced challenges when pursuing the path of qualitative research in their academic endeavors in data collection. The researcher faced problems in data collection and challenges in publications. However, this study intended to write the viewpoint based on the author's research experience in dealing with his PhD journey and several projects' data collection in Bangladesh. It is not easy to collect data in qualitative research (Sutton, & Austin, 2015). Respondents are not interested in spending their time as they are concerned about their time, potential risk, and any uncertain difficulties (Watt, 2007). In addition, they do not understand the benefits of the research and their benefits. They asked, "Is there any benefit for them or there are any problems if they participate in the research?" Some of the respondents are aware of their

institutional problems. They try to raise their voice to solve the issue and for the betterment of the industry. Moreover, some of the respondents are very flexible and openhearted in providing the responses and welcoming the research (Trinh, 2019).

2. METHOD

Although qualitative and quantitative methods are frequently seen as distinct approaches, it has been suggested that distinct study concepts and data collection procedures be combined to get unique results. Previous investigations have indicated that this is advantageous for the comprehensive examination of difficult studies (Decuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). More specifically, a real experimental design includes at least two independent, parallel groups, randomly assigns individuals to the groups, and evaluates treatments prospectively, according to quantitative research (Slack & Draugalis, 2001). When used in qualitative research, an open and interpretivist methodology supports the study and analysis (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012). Investigating processes and behaviors in the social sciences appears to benefit greatly from the combination of a qualitative and experimental approach (Kleining & Witt, 2000; Wagoner, 2015).

This research employed an experimental design. The researcher made use of his observations about the procedures involved in gathering data and publishing it. Nine methodological strategies can be used to address the three types of validity requirements (interpretivist, internal, and external) that were defined based on a survey of both quantitative and qualitative literature (Steils, 2021). It has been demonstrated that qualitative experiments help analyze behaviors and processes (Kleining, 1986). Since these research streams are particularly and increasingly interested in examining the activities and behaviors (Steils, 2021), this study compares the value of qualitative experiments to investigate key processes and behaviors in data collection (information search & learning, and decision-making) (Cho, Fu & Wu, 2017).

3. RESULT

3.1 Observational Notes - As an Enumerator

As a data enumerator, when I tried to collect data from the participants who wished to be part of the research, here, from my point of view, I noticed the power of the relationship between the researcher and the participants. There are positive outcomes as well as negative results in terms of collecting the data. The known participants help a lot by giving the data in a very friendly manner and in most cases, they do not have a fear of being disclosed for their interviews which leads them to give the proper actual answers without any bias. It is related to both quantitative and qualitative research. It is also a cost-effective way, for example, when I spread out my survey form through social media to my known friends, families, or my selected samples who are related to the research topic can be able to give the data, it does not take money or other benefits which is a cost-effective way. Similar things also happened, when I took interviews of my known sample participants. The biggest advantage of it is, that I can get higher quality data, which did not get from unknown participants in similar research. This is the positive side of data collection.

From known participants, the disadvantage I noticed is data manipulation unintentionally. When I ask some questions to my known one, he or she asks me the very first why is this question and what is I am supposed to do with the data; after that, he or she gives their opinions, and experiences as data to me. After listening to my research idea, he/she makes a generalization to answer the questions and gives the answers from those perspectives and it sometimes doesn't give me the actual data which might be supposed to answer differently.

Here, the main problem arises when I try to collect data from unknown participants. The first problem I faced to reaching out to the participants and making them agree to participate in my research to help me by giving their data and by sharing their experiences. Some of them, do agree and some of them do not. It makes a huge time loss; it means, it's hard to collect data from unknown participants as a researcher. On the other hand, if someone agrees to share his/her experiences, he/she does not take it seriously which results in the vogue research paper with vogue data sets. The low-quality data with higher cost issues make the researchers, like me, so frustrated.

Qualitative research's dynamic nature can also provide some difficulties and data-collecting techniques such as interviews and observation cannot be guaranteed by qualitative researchers (Houghton et al., 2010). Besides, for this sort of study, one-off consent may not be appropriate (McDonnell, Jones, and Read, 2000).

It's generally hard to anticipate the risk-benefit ratio in qualitative research (Ramcharan and Cutcliffe, 2001). Researchers, on the other hand, have a responsibility to foresee and balance the rewards and risks of data gathering; for instance, if the participant feels upset during an interview, I must be prepared to admit that the interview's usefulness does not exceed the participant's suffering. As a result, I have to be ready to end the discussion immediately without causing any harm to the participant's mental health.

Some of the participants do not understand the meaning of research and the benefits of the research. They asked how it would impact their industry and how we benefit from your research. Sometimes, they are not intending to share the inherent scenario due to their job security as well as due to the image damage of the industry. Some of the participants are not interested in interview recording as they are scared.

In contrast, some of the participants are very welcoming in providing information and conducting more research on the respective topics. Some of them provided gifts to the enumerator along with detailed information about the research topic. Some of the participants suggested some other relevant participants of the research topic. Some participants suggested showing the findings positively so that the policymakers can utilize the research output.

3.2 Observational Notes - As an Author

Some topmost journal editors were soft/flexible in scrutinizing the paper and the editorial review process. Some of the accounting journal editors are not interested in qualitative papers. They initially desk rejected the manuscript without having the justifications. Even though, after publishing my methodology paper in a top-ranked Emerald journal I faced difficulties in publishing the manuscript as I mentioned in the cover letter. In addition, some last-quartile ranked journals and newer journals were not interested in sending the paper to review and rejected the paper due to methodology.

The reviewer's opinion and review response were mixed. Some of the reviewers were experts in quantitative methodology and some of the reviewers were experts in qualitative research. Some reviewers do not find the methodology in a suitable approach and some recommended adding a hypothesis and justifying the results. Where were the study's hypothetical assumptions and results for each hypothesis? Another challenge was to manage the response of the reviewers while asking for the quantitative data. Sometimes, it was difficult to manage the qualitative reviewers while asking for additional data and responses. Finally, I mentioned in the response letter that the project methodology was already published in a reputed Scopus-indexed journal published by Emerald.

Another difficulty in obtaining permission to observe the data collection is determining whether text-based and verbal approval is necessary (Houghton et al., 2010). We know that before beginning data collection, genuine qualitative research needs the same level of investigation as any effective quantitative study. But, sometimes, the editors do not adequately measure the qualitative researchers. For example, many of my qualitative research papers were rejected because of measuring those with quantitative research methods instead of qualitative which is different in ways. We know that quantitative research has a lack of details whereas qualitative researches have a detailed, subjectivity with no generalizations. Some of the editors search for information like quantitative research and reject those papers.

Moreover, because of the extensive details utilized in qualitative research, maintaining confidentiality while maintaining research ethics is sometimes more difficult. Researchers may have to employ different identifications and be judicious when reporting participants' identifying traits, and rigorous means for ensuring confidentiality must be built into the study's design (Houghton et al., 2010). Besides, establishing and maintaining a trustworthy relationship with the participants is a research ethic that I have to maintain the relationship as a researcher to get in-depth information easily which leads to a high-quality research paper.

Sometimes, I have also seen that some editors do not recommend the problem of the paper. Though some of them are very friendly and help a lot. But, in some cases, it is not happening. It is tough to get where the actual problem I have occurred and which thing I have to remember for further research studies. As a result, it becomes very depressing when I put full effort into a paper with my valuable time. So, getting proper feedback is another difficulty I have seen from my experiences. Though, rejection is a normal process in research publications. It would be flexible to have more qualitative research journals or editors may be flexible in considering the qualitative papers.

3.3 Observational Notes - As a Reviewer

Some procedures must be maintained in qualitative research by the reviewer, which is necessary for fairness. Case study, grounded theory, historical model, ethnographic model, narrative model (which incorporates textual analysis), and phenomenological are six forms of concepts or types of qualitative research commonly acknowledged by editors. If they get the justified research and methodology maintaining all research ethics by substantial grounds, they accept the paper. I have seen that so many researchers take huge numbers of interviews which have no justifications in real life though and those papers are rejected by editors. But it goes through a long screening procedure. Besides, they also provide corrections to the researcher if something is missing in the qualitative research paper. For example, I reviewed some of the qualitative papers and found that data has been collected from more than hindered participants but the findings are not rigorous and in-depth.

When a journal editor receives a qualitative manuscript that fails to clearly distinguish which of the typologies the study follows, the editor immediately assumes that the researcher is unfamiliar with the 'research guardrails' and expectations that should be followed in conducting robust qualitative research; It is very easy to expose research naivety by failing to clarify which research paradigm, from within the qualitative family of alternatives, a researcher is adhering to (Editage Insights, 2019).

Ensuring that bias is not mistakenly ingrained in data-gathering procedures and a strategy that necessitates the use of a hypothesis study design. So, when the editorial board finds biases that happened in a paper, they reject those, as the research ethics allows the researchers to avoid 'bias' in terms of qualitative research studies.

Confirmation bias is another type of bias that refers to the propensity to perceive knowledge in a manner that supports one's assumptions. When some writers cleverly misinterpret their blueprint for a research method, an editor is skeptical since one of the main concerns for an editor is that the findings cannot be repeated or hide the truth of the author's confirmation bias. I have realized from the standpoint of a journal editor that they accept a qualitative article, the authors clearly state the actions were taken first from start to the finish of the research which is the most important responsibility is to do as a researcher.

According to an editor, to maintain a higher standard of researches, an editor expects an author 5 things and those are- (1) clearly state research paper; (2) reveal the conceptual underpinning; (3) specify with adequate clarity what happened in the investigation so that replication is possible; (4) refer to the 'guardrails' to avoid confirmation bias; and (5) illustrate an overall level of adequacy (Editage Insights, 2019) and these are also matched with my real life experiences.

Furthermore, I reviewed some of the interesting qualitative methodology papers. The authors rationalized the study topic very well. They systematically followed the methodology and showed the findings as per research questions. In those cases, there were minor comments and suggestions before the publication of the manuscript.

Importantly, the respondent numbers are not a barrier in terms of qualitative research. As I have already mentioned above sometimes the huge number of respondents without proper justification may lead to a vague failed research paper. Here, if I have very few such as 15 or 20 respondents but all are justified with the research properly by giving the saturated evidence, then those qualitative researches with the quality data do not make any barrier in terms of publishing in high quality journals.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the perception of the researcher in qualitative research. It illustrates the positivity as well as the problem with higher complications and challenges in terms of qualitative research and publications. These are based on the author's experience as a qualitative researcher. The argument draws upon personal experience and observations on the contemporary debates about qualitative research data collection in the context of Bangladesh and publication among academicians and researchers. The study finds that data collection in qualitative research is not an easy process (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Respondents are not interested in spending their time as they are concerned about their time, potential risk, and any uncertain difficulties (Watt, 2007).

In addition, respondents do not understand the benefits of the research. They asked, "Is there any benefit for them or there are any problems if they participate in the research?" Some of the respondents are aware of their institutional problems. They try to raise their voice to solve the issue and for the betterment of the industry. Moreover, some of the respondents are very flexible and openhearted in providing the responses and welcoming the research. Some of the editors and reviewers are more flexible in qualitative research and some are not interested in qualitative research. Thus, selecting a good journal makes it difficult to publish qualitative research papers. The paper is the perceptions of the author's data collection experiences and research publications.

This study is limited to the personal observation of the researcher in data collection. This study outlined the challenges and perceptions of individuals rather than collecting empirical data and validating the findings. Researchers can outline their own experience in data collection as well as research publications. The challenges and positive perceptions would be helpful for novice researchers.

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