

Qualitative Research Design and Approaches

Fathiyyah Abu Bakar, PhD

Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz School of Accountancy (TISSA-UUM)

COB-UUM

SESSION OUTLINE



Overview of Qualitative Research



Types of Qualitative Research



Designing Qualitative Research



Sampling in Qualitative Research



Analyzing Qualitative Data



Ethics Guidelines in Qualitative Research

Ice Breaking



What is Qualitative Research?

- Qualitative research is a type of scientific research that:
 - Seeks answers to a question;
 - Uses a predefined set of procedures;
 - Collects evidence;
 - Produces findings that were not determined in advance; and
 - Produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study.



What is qualitative research?



- Multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)
- Values and seeks to discover participants' perspectives of their world
- Relies on people's words and observable behavior as the primary data

What is qualitative research?



- Provides complex textual description of how people experience in a given research issue.
- Provides information about the “human” side of an issue – behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals.
- Helps to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation and implications of quantitative data.



Characteristics of Qualitative Research



- Natural setting as the direct source of data
- The researcher is the key instrument
- Descriptive
- Concerned with process rather than outcomes or products
- Inductive analysis of data
- Focus on understanding constructed meaning

Natural Setting

- Concern for context
 - Crucial in deciding whether or not the findings may have meaning in some other contexts as well
- Action can be understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs
 - “... human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs...”

(Bogdan & Biklen, 1992)

The Researcher is the Key Instrument

- Data are mediated through this human instrument (researcher), rather than some inanimate inventory, questionnaire or computer (Merriam, 1998).
- Qualitative methods depend upon the researcher's ability to process information, respond sensitively to social cues and adjust the research design as data are interpreted and new questions emerge.
- The researcher is able to interact with the situation and provide immediate feedback and request verification of data.

Descriptive



- Words, pictures
- Results contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation
- Data are analyzed with all their “richness” as closely as possible to the form in which they were recorded or transcribed.
- Thick description

Concerned with process

- Quantitative research:

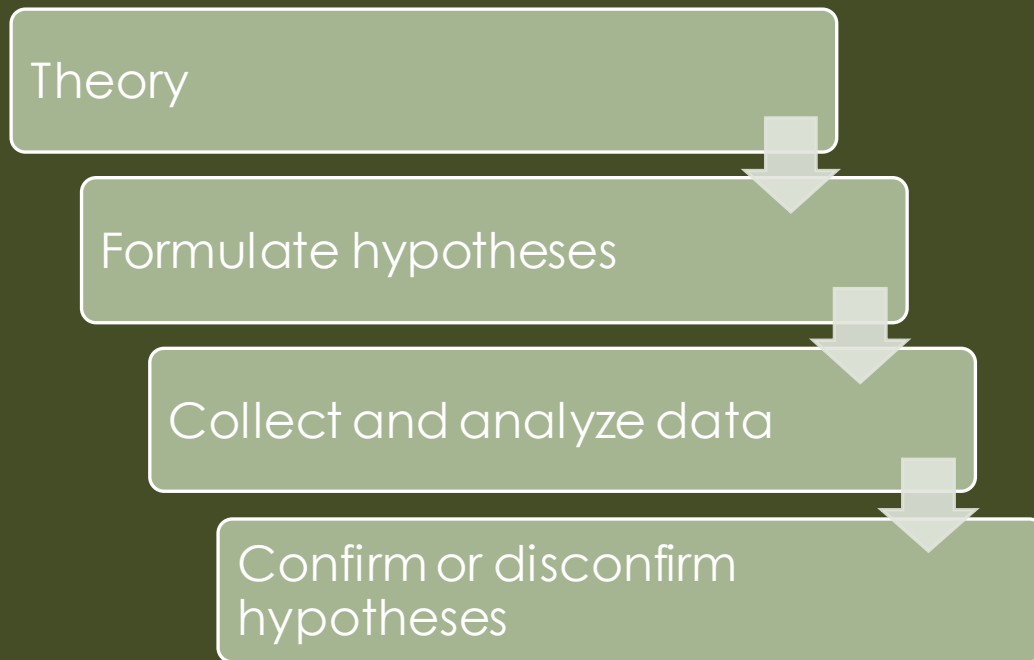
Company expectation  Customers' satisfaction index

- Qualitative research:

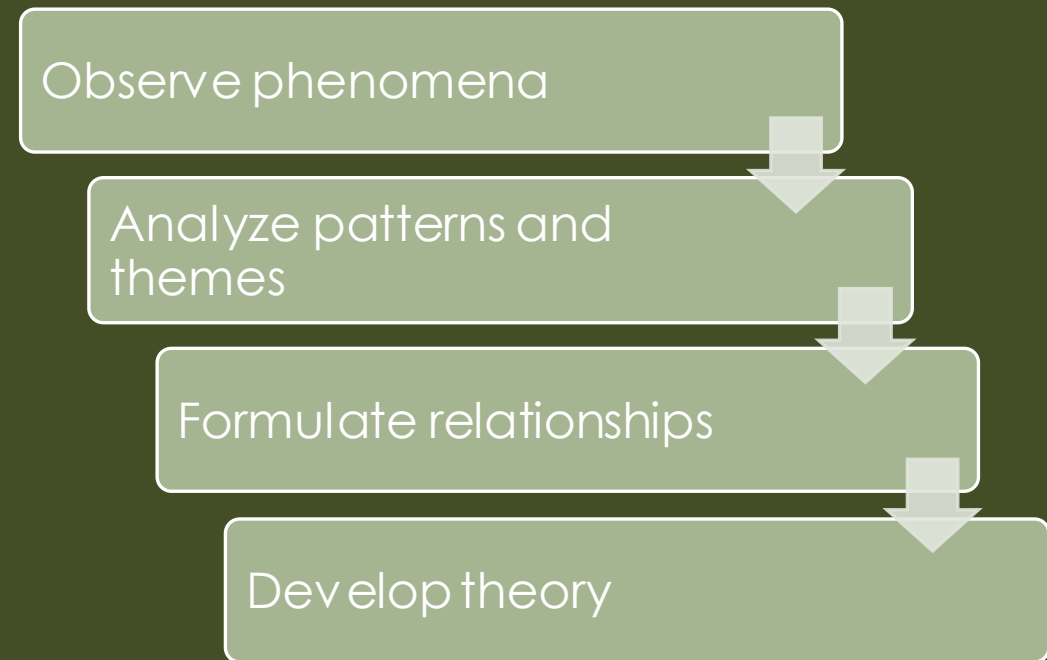
How the expectations are translated into daily activities, procedures and interactions

Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

Deductive



Inductive



Focus on understanding constructed meaning

- Meaning and knowledge are constructed in a social context
- Effort to understand research participants' subjective perspectives
- Often accomplished by including research participants as members of the research team (e.g. action research)

Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Approaches

	Quantitative	Qualitative
General framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek to confirm hypotheses about phenomena• Instrument use more rigid style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions• Use highly structured methods such as questionnaires, surveys and structured observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek to explore phenomena• Instruments are more flexible, iterative style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions• Use semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation
Analytical objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To quantify variation• To predict causal relationships• To describe characteristics of a population	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To describe variation• To describe and explain relationships• To describe individual experiences• To describe group norms

Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Approaches

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Question format	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Closed-ended	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open-ended
Data format	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Numerical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Textual
Flexibility in study design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stable from beginning to end• Participant responses do not influence or determine how and which questions researchers ask next• Study design is subjected to statistical assumptions and conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible in designing interview questions (addition, exclusion or wording)• Participant responses affect how and which questions researchers ask next• Study design is iterative, data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learned

Types of Qualitative Research

- Case study
- Ethnography
- Grounded theory
- Phenomenology and ethnomethodology
- Biographical method
- Historical social science
- Participative inquiry
- Clinical research



(Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)

What is case?

- Case is “a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context” (Yin, 2002).
- Case is “ a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries”. It can be a person, a program, a group, a specific policy etc (Merriam, 1998).



What is case study?

- Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates the case or cases by addressing the “how” and “why” questions concerning the phenomenon interest.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuG8AzK9GVQ>

- Case study knowledge is more concrete, more contextual, more developed by reader interpretation and relies on the determination of reference by the reader (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1988).
- Qualitative case study approach
 - more concerns on understanding and describing a process rather than behavioral outcomes (Merriam, 1988);
 - when the concepts and context are not well defined because it can help to gain insights, understanding and explanations of certain phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 1989).

What is case study?



Characteristics of case study

- Stake (1995) defines four characteristics of case study
 - i. Holistic – interrelationship between the phenomenon and its context
 - ii. Empirical – observation in the field
 - iii. Interpretive – researcher-subject interaction
 - iv. Emphatic – reflecting the vicarious experiences of the subjects

Characteristics of case study

- Merriam (1988) lists four essential characteristics of qualitative case studies:
 - i. particularistic – focusing on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon;
 - ii. descriptive – the report of case study is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study;
 - iii. heuristic – illuminating the reader's understanding of the phenomenon by explaining the reasons; and
 - iv. inductive – for the most part relying on inductive reasoning for discovering new relationships, concepts and understanding

Type of case studies

Descriptive - one that is focused and detailed, in which propositions and questions about a phenomenon are carefully scrutinized and articulated at the outset.

Illustrative - serve primarily to give readers a common language about the topic in question.

Exploratory/pilot - usually the precursor to a formal, large-scale research project and the aim is to prove that further investigation is necessary.

Explanatory - to explain the reasons for observed phenomenon and the focus of such research is on the specific case using a theory rather than to make generalizations

Type of case studies



The case study design relies on the nature of the research questions (Yin, 2009), the amount of control of the issues under study, and the types of desired end products (Merriam, 1988).



- Individual case study
- Set of individual case studies
- Community study
- Social group study
- Studies of organizations
- Studies of events, roles and relationships
- Multiple case studies

Key Questions in analyzing the case



What is the issue?



What is the goal of the analysis?



What is the context of the problem?



What are the key facts that should be considered?



What alternatives are available to the decision-maker?



What would you recommend — and why?

Case Study Research Design

Case study research - a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded system (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2007)

Qualitative case study - research design and data collection efforts are focused on the research questions (how? and why?)

Case Study Research Design

It allows researchers to gain holistic and meaningful characteristics of individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries for the purposes of exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research rather than hypothesis testing (Yin, 2003).

Unit of analysis – e.g: in an organizational study – individual staff, a department/unit or the whole organization

Planning a case study

01

Selecting a Case

- Choose the subject, topic or case

02

Identifying the audience/user

03

Determining the research goal

- Type of case study
- Ethics

Planning a case study

- Developing a case
 - The case study's questions
 - The study's propositions
 - How information and data will be collected and analyzed
 - The logic behind the propositions
 - How the findings will be interpreted
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9KK_0zr3LU&t=194s

Case Study Protocol

Overview of the case study - objectives, topic and issues.



Procedures for gathering information and conducting interviews.

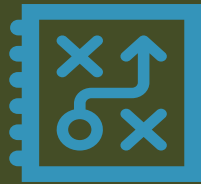


Questions that will be asked during interviews and data collection.



Final case study report (research report)

Application of the case study design



Challenge:

**the ability to
access the field
or company**



Data collection:

Participant-observation;

Direct observation

In-depth and open-ended
interviews;

Questionnaires; and

Analysis of documentation

Archival records

Physical artifacts

Application of the case study design

- Data analysis is “the process of making sense out of the data which involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning” (Merriam, 1998)

Ethnography

- Interpretive approach for describing, analyzing and interpreting a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs and language that develop over time
- Examine groups not individuals
- Not to generate theory
- To understand culture, ethnographer spends considerable time "in the field" interviewing, observing and examining documents to provide detailed descriptions of the culture

Grounded Theory

- Theory generation
- Inductive
- Emphasizes the use of data analysis steps of open, axial and selective coding and the development of a logic paradigm or a visual picture of the theory generated

Action Research



- Seeks full collaborative inquiry by all participants
- Engages in sustained change
- Seeks to “decentralize” traditional research by maintaining a commitment to local contexts rather than seeking general truth
- In organization, members of staff collaboratively inquire into their own practice, make changes and assess the effects of those changes

Designing Qualitative Research

- Stating the research problem
 - Justify the research problem
 - Identify deficiencies in the evidence
 - Relate the discussion to audience
- Linking theory and research topic
- Conceptualizing initial curiosities

Data Collection

- In-depth interviews
- Focus groups
- Observation
- Participant in the setting
- Analysis of documents and materials

Interview

- Fully structured
 - Has predetermined questions with fixed wording, usually in a pre-set order
- Semi-structured
 - Widely used in qualitative research
 - Has predetermined questions but the order can be modified
 - Questions wording can be changed and explanations given
- Unstructured
 - The interviewer has a general area of interest and concern

Focus Groups

- A group interview on a specific topic
- Open-ended group discussion guided by the researcher
- 6-12 participants is common
- Range and amount of data are increased
- Group dynamics help in focusing on most important topics



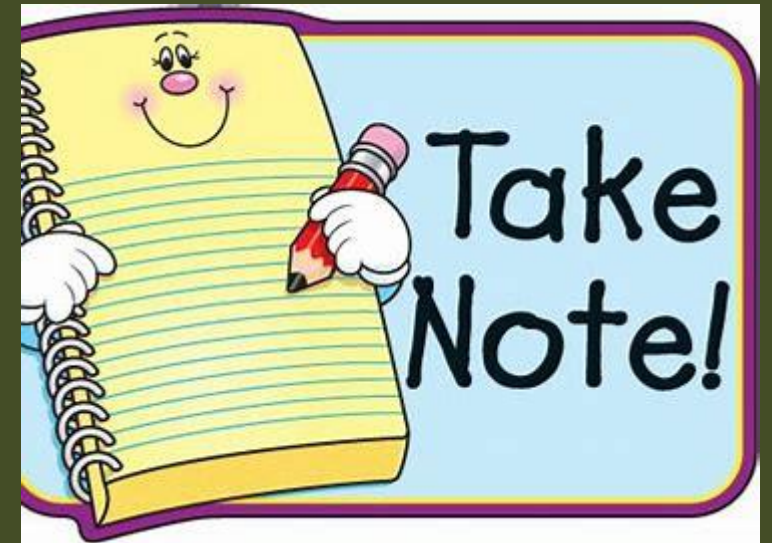
Observation

- Participant observation
- Non-participant observation
 - Observer becomes part of the observed group
- Structured observation
 - Attend to pre-specified aspects to be observed



Form of Qualitative Data

- Field notes
- Audio / video recordings
- Pictures
- Transcripts
- Documents
- Artifacts
- Memos



Sampling in Qualitative Research

- Only a sample (subset of population) based on research objectives and the characteristics of the study population (e.g: size and diversity) to determine which and how many people to select.
 - Random sampling (select representative individuals) – to generalize from sample to the population
 - Purposeful sampling (select people or sites who can best help us understand the phenomena – to develop a detailed understanding

A realistic site is where:

- Entry is possible (convenient sampling) and build on insights and connections from that early data collections (snowball sampling)
- There is high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people, interactions, programs and structures of interest are presented
- The researcher is likely to build trusting relations with participants
- Data quality and credibility are reasonably assured

Sample Size

- Number of observation sessions
- Number of interviews
- Number of participants



Sample Size

- Difficult to pre-specify the number of observation sessions, interviews and participants required
- Researcher is expected to make several visits to the field to collect data
- Data are analyzed between visits
- Iterative
- Visits continue until the categories found through analysis are saturated
 - When further data collection appears to add little or nothing to what you have already learned

(Robson, 2002)

Sample Size

- An estimate number of participants needed to reach saturation depends on:
 - The scope of the study
 - The nature of the topic
 - Quality of the data
 - Study design
 - Research method

(Morse, 2000)

Analyzing Qualitative Data

- Constant comparative method
 - Gather data, sort into categories, collect additional information, compare new information with emerging categories
 - Inductive – from indicators (small segments of information) to several codes to abstract categories
- Phases
 - Open coding
 - Axial coding
 - Selective coding

Open Coding

- Formation of initial categories and sub-categories of information
- The categories can be used on all form of data collected (e.g: interviews, observations, field notes etc.)

Axial Coding

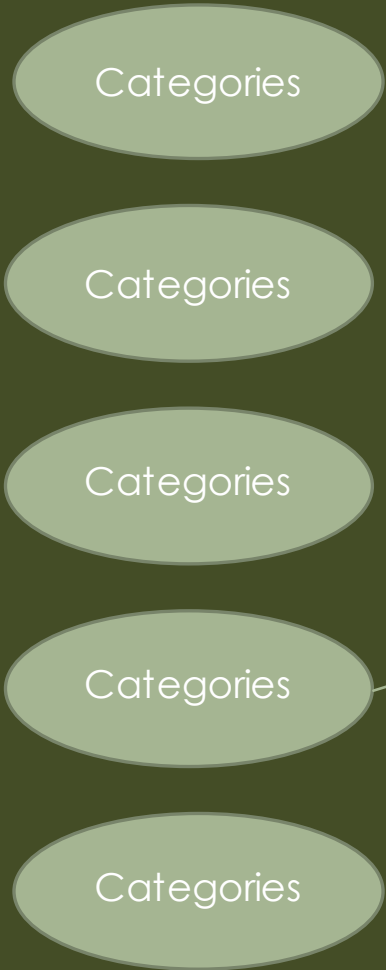
- Select one open coding category, position it at the center of the process being explored (core phenomena) and relate other categories to it.
- These other categories are the causal conditions (factors that influence the core phenomena), strategies (actions taken in response to the CP), contextual and intervening conditions (specific and general situational factors that influence the strategies) and consequences (outcomes from using the strategies).
- Draw a diagram (coding paradigm) which portrays the interrelationship of causal conditions, strategies, contextual and intervening conditions and consequences.

Selecting Core Category

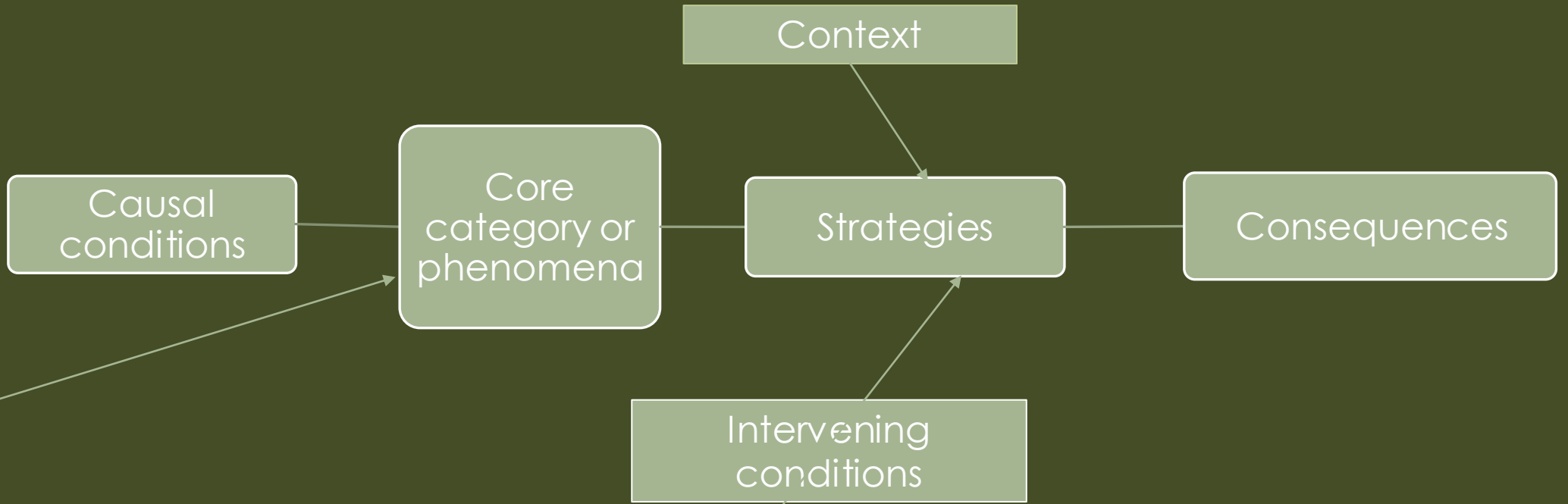
- Select core category for central phenomena as a basis for writing the theory
- Criteria
 - It must be central
 - It must appear frequently in the data
 - The explanation that evolves is logical and consistent
 - The name of the central category should be abstract
 - As the concept is refined, the theory grows in depth and explanatory power
 - When conditions vary, the explanation still holds, although the way in which a phenomena is expressed might look somewhat different

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

Open Coding Categories



Axial Coding Paradigm



(Creswell, 2002)

Selective Coding

- Write a theory from the interrelationship of the categories in the axial coding model
 - An abstract explanation for the process being studied
 - A process of integrating and refining the theory through such techniques as writing out the story line that interconnects the categories and sorting through personal memos about theoretical ideas

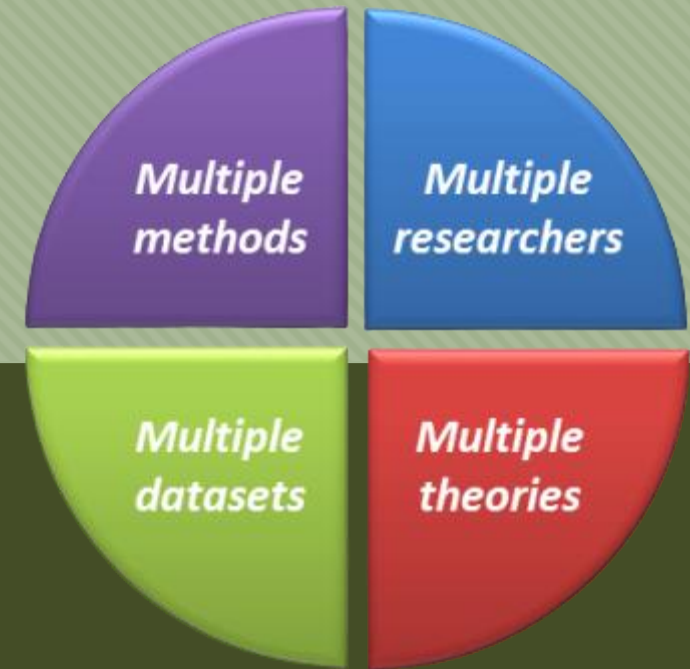
Ethics Guideline in Qualitative Research

- Respect for persons – autonomy of research participants
- Beneficence – minimize risks and maximize the benefits
- Justice – fair distribution of the risks and benefits
- Deploying self – degree of participation
- Informed consent – oral and written consent
- Building trust – anonymity and confidentiality
- Interpersonal relationship

Trustworthiness of Interpretive Research

- Credibility
 - How credible are the findings of the study?
- Transferability
 - How transferable and applicable are these findings to another setting or group of people?
- Dependability
 - How can we be reasonably certain that finding would be replicated?
- Confirmability
 - How can we be certain that the findings reflect the participants and the inquiry itself rather than a fabrication from the researcher's biases or prejudices?

Credibility



- Technique to establish credibility
 - Rigorous techniques and methods for gathering high-quality data
 - Carefully analysis
 - Attending to issue of validity, reliability and triangulation

(Patton,1990)

- Member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Transferability

- Thick description
 - Provide a detailed description of
 - Context in which the research takes place
 - design and method
 - data collection and analysis

(Geertz, 1973)

Dependability

- An attempt to account for changing conditions in the phenomena chosen for study
- Audit trail
 - To keep a full record of all activities while carrying out the study
 - Ensure the dependability of procedures, findings and conclusions



Confirmability

- Researcher is interested in providing evidence to allow readers to confirm result of his study
- Techniques
 - Audit trail
 - Triangulation
 - Member checking
 - Reflective journal

