

How to Write Qualitative Research Proposal

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Abstract

This theoretical paper aims to understand the meaning of qualitative research and types of qualitative research. Qualitative research is unstructured. Qualitative designs are “emergent” rather than fixed. The results of qualitative research are unpredictable. It deals with nature and meaning of different types of qualitative research and how to write the qualitative type of research proposal. What are the steps of research proposal, how to present it in a std. format. Which things are included in the research proposal? The purpose of "qualitative" or "naturalistic" research varies according to the research paradigm, methods, and assumptions. All research proposals must address the following questions: What you plan to accomplish, why you want to do it and how you are going to do it.

Key Words: *Types of qualitative research, Std. format of proposal, Purpose of qualitative study.*

INTRODUCTION

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin 1994). Qualitative research is intended to penetrate to the deeper significance that the subject of the research ascribes to the topic being researched. It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter and gives priority to what the data contribute to important research questions or existing information.

Qualitative research encompasses a range of philosophies, research designs and specific techniques including in-depth qualitative interviews; participant and non-participant observation; focus groups; document analyses; and a number of other methods of data collection (Pope 2006). Qualitative research is unstructured. Qualitative designs are “emergent” rather than fixed. The results of qualitative research are unpredictable. (MORSE-1994)

Main Types of Qualitative Research-

Case study_ Attempts to shed light on a phenomenon by studying in depth a single case example of the phenomena. The case can be an individual person, an event, a group, or an institution.

Grounded theory- Theory is developed inductively from a corpus of data acquired by a participant-observer.

Phenomenology- Describes the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines.

Ethnography- Focuses on the sociology of meaning through close field observation of sociocultural phenomena. Typically, the ethnographer focuses on a community.

Historical_ Systematic collection and objective evaluation of data related to past occurrences in order to test hypotheses concerning causes, effects, or trends of these events that may help to explain present events and anticipate future events. (Gay, 1996) When you are applying for a research degree like PhD or you want to take project from different funding agencies. You will probably have to write a research proposal as a part of your application file. So first you have to prove you are capable of making a contribution and therefore write a research proposal that meets certain standards. The goal of a research proposal is to present and justify a research idea you have and to present the practical ways in which you think this research should be conducted.

When you are writing a research proposal keep in mind that it will enter a competition, being read in line with quite a few other research proposals, you have to come up with a document that has an impact upon the readers: write clearly and well structured so that your message gets across easily, one's research is only as good as one's proposal.

A research proposal is intended to convince others that you have a worthwhile research project and that you have the competence and the work-plan to complete it. Generally, a research

proposal should contain all the key elements involved in the research process and include sufficient information for the readers to evaluate the proposed study.

Regardless of your research area and the methodology you choose, all research proposals must address the following questions: What you plan to accomplish, why you want to do it and how you are going to do it.

The proposal should have sufficient information to convince your readers that you have an important research idea, that you have a good grasp of the relevant literature and the major issues, and that your methodology is sound.

The quality of your research proposal depends not only on the quality of your proposed project, but also on the quality of your proposal writing. A good research project may run the risk of rejection simply because the proposal is poorly written. Therefore, it pays if your writing is coherent, clear and compelling.

Std. Format for Proposal-

Most research studies begins with a written proposal nearly all proposals follow the same format. Infact, the proposal is identical to the first three chapters of the final paper except that its written in future tense .for eg.in the proposal, you might say something like “the researchers will secure the sample from” while in final paper it would be changed to “the researcher secured the sample from”. The most commonly used style for writing research report is called APA and the rules are described in the population manual of the American psychological association.

Avoid the use of first person pronouns refer to yourself or research team in third person instead of saying I will or we will say ,the researcher will or the research team will.

Title page-

All text on the title page is centered vertically and horizontally. The title page has no page number and it is not counted in any page numbering.

Page layout-

Left margin 1.5”, Right margin 1”, Top and Bottom margin 1”

Page numbering-

Page are numbered at the top right. These should be 1”of white space from the top of the page no. to the top of the paper. Numeric page numbering begins with the first page of chapter 1

Spacing and justification-

All pages are single sided. Text is doubled-spaced, except for long quotations and the bibliography (which are singled spaced) there is one blank line between a section heading and the text that follows it do not right-justify text. Use ragged –right.

Font face and size-

Any easily readable font is acceptable (Times New Roman). The font should be 12pointsgenerally same font must be throughout the manuscript except 1) tables and graphs may use a different font and2) chapter titles and section headings may use a different font.

References-

APA format should be used to cite references within the paper. If you name the author in your sentence, then follow the authors name with the year in parentheses .For eg.Batras (2005) found that.....

If you do not include the authors name as part of the text, then both the author’s name and year are enclosed in parentheses. For eg.one researcher (Batras 2005) found that... ..

A complete bibliography is attached at the end of the paper. It is doubled spaced except single spacing is used for a multiple-line reference. The first line of each reference is intended

The purpose of "qualitative" or "naturalistic" research varies according to the research paradigm, methods, and assumptions.

Purpose of the Qualitative Study is Discovery,Description,Conceptualization (theory building)
Sensitization,Emancipatory?

The generic outline that follows is suggested as a point of departure for qualitative research proposals, and it applies specifically to the research paradigm and methods that seem most applicable to the study of families and family therapy (e.g., post-positivist, phenomenological clinical observation and long interviews). The outline is intended to serve as a point of departure for researchers, who must decide how to organize their proposals (a) to best communicate their ideas to their intended audiences and (b) to satisfy the demands of the context.

I) Introduction-

1) Beginwith write something interesting, e.g., a quote or story, to capture the reader's interest.

- 2) Introduce your question or curiosity. What is it that you want to know or understand? How did you get interested in the topic? If your question has evolved since you have begun, describe the process.
- 3) Tell why there's a need for the study. Cite relevant literature that calls for the need for the research in this area, or demonstrates the lack of attention to the topic. In your own words, describe how you think this study will be useful.
- 4) Describe the intended audience for your research (e.g., the public, family therapists).
- 5) Describe your research product. What form will the report take (e.g., scholarly manuscript, magazine article for the public, script for a documentary video)?
- 6) Conclude the introduction with an overview of your proposal.
- 7) The Problem/Research Question-The problem can be broad, but must be specific enough to convince others that it is worth focusing on. Research questions clearly delineated (sometimes with sub-questions) Scope of the research question(s) needs to be manageable within the time frame and context of the study.
- 8) Literature Review-which situates the study in the ongoing discourse the topic and develop the specific intellectual traditions to which the study links. Selective and persuasive – building a case for what is known or believed, what's missing, and how the study fits in. Literature is used to demonstrate openness to complexity of phenomenon, rather than funneling toward an a priori conceptualization.
- 9) Building the conceptual framework-the purposes of building the conceptual framework is,
 - To describe the substantive focus of the research-the topic-and its purposes.
 - To frame it in large theoretical, policy, social or practical domain and thereby develop its significance.
 - To pose initial research questions
 - To forecast the literature to be discussed in the review of related literature.
 - To discuss the limitation of the study.

II) Research Paradigm-

This section should be included in your proposal when you expect to have readers who are not familiar with the naturalistic research paradigm. It may not be necessary in contexts where qualitative research is an accepted form of inquiry.

A) Use specific language to name and describe your research paradigm (e.g., naturalistic, post-positivist). The term "paradigm" is used here to represent the epistemological, conceptual foundation for qualitative research.

B) Describe the philosophical correlates of your research paradigm (e.g., phenomenology, hermeneutics).

C) Cite authors who have defined your research paradigm in the social sciences and suggested its application to your field of study and/or your specific topic of study.

D) Explain the assumptions of your research paradigm.

1. Broadly speaking, describe what you intend to accomplish through this research (e.g., expanding a knowledge base, generating hypotheses for quantitative research, developing a grounded theory, emancipating informants, establishing the trustworthiness of a theory).

2. Explain the assumptions about the nature of knowledge and reality that underlie your research paradigm. Discuss how a formal literature review will be used.

3. Describe the major tasks of the researcher in this paradigm of research. Comment on how the tasks differ in conventional social science research.

4. Explain the type of relationship that the researcher has with the informants (e.g., unobtrusive observer, participant observer, collaborator, emancipation).

E) Suggest the appropriate criteria for evaluating the research findings, research process, and the research report. The criteria should be consistent with your research paradigm and well documented.

III) Research Method-

Which details the overall design, the site or population of interest, the specific methods for gathering data, a preliminary discussion of strategies for analyzing the data, how the study's trustworthiness will be ensured, the personal biography of the researcher and ethical and political issues that may arise in the conduct of the study.

A) Identify and generally describe your research method (e.g., ethnographic field study, single case study), and your research procedures (e.g., long interviews, observation).

B) Cite the major authors who have described your research method.

C) Describe what you intend to do in detail, as you begin your study.

1. Explain how you will select informants and gain entry into the research context (if relevant).

2. Describe the procedures you will take to protect the rights of your informants (e.g., informed consent, human subject's approval, and debriefing).
3. Describe the Sample and sampling procedure (purposive or theoretical), purpose of sampling, sample size. Explain the Characteristics of potential types of persons, events or Processes to be sampled
4. Describe the kind of relationship you intend to have with the informants. Will you be neutral, collaborative, and objective?
5. Describe the kind of data you will collect (e.g., field notes from memory, audio tapes, video tapes, transcripts of conversations, examination of existing documents, etc.).
6. Data Collection and Analysis- Describe your intended data collection procedures (Individual interviews, participant observation, focus groups, personal and public documents, internet-based data, videos) etc If interviews are to be used, list your question(s) or attach as an appendix. Describe any equipment to be used. *Data Collection and Analysis* Add details and more details about how data will be gathered and processed
- 6) Describe the procedures you will use to keep track of the research process. This will become part of your audit trail.
 - Process notes: Day to day activities, methodological notes, decision making procedures.
 - Materials relating to intentions and reactions: personal notes about motivations, experiences with informants, etc.
 - Instrument development information: revisions of interview questions, etc.
- 7) Describe your intended data analysis procedures (coding, sorting, etc.)?
 - Data reduction: Write-ups of field notes, transcription procedures and conventions, computer programs used, etc.
 - Data reconstruction: development of categories, findings, conclusions, connections to existing literature, integration of concepts.
- 8) Describe how the research design may evolve as the process unfolds.
- 9) Describe how you will organize, format and present your data, interpretations, and conclusions.

10. Time and resources must be carefully planned. Think through resource issues like time, personnel and money, in advance.

11. Articulating the value and logic of the research is necessary to convince people of its Usefulness and credibility

D) Describe how you will consider and protect "reliability" and "validity." Will you use systematic methods and procedures, triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, auditing?

IV. Preliminary Biases, Suppositions and Hypotheses

1. Summarize and reference all of the relevant literature that you have reviewed to date.

2. Describe how your review of the literature has influenced the way you are approaching the research.

3. Discuss how your previous experience with your topic has influenced the way you have conceptualized this research. Summarize relevant personal and professional experiences, if you have not done so in the Introduction.

4. Disclose the anticipated findings, your hypotheses and your hunches.

5. Describe the procedures you will use to remain "open" to unexpected information (e.g., peer debriefing).

6. Discuss the limitations of your study in the context of the limitations of all similar studies.

7. knowing the Strategies for Limiting Bias in Interpretations-Include plan to search for negative cases. Describe how analysis will include a purposeful examination of alternative explanations.

Using members of the research team to critically question the analysis. Planning to conduct an audit of data collection and analytic strategies

8. Knowing Soundness of the research-Reflected throughout the proposal. And address this specifically, using relevant criteria for the qualitative approach used. Which strategies used, Triangulation? Prolonged contact with informants, including continuous validation of data Continuous checking for representativeness of data and fit between coding categories and data and use of expert consultant.

9. Discuss the Ethical considerations– Consent forms and Dealing with sensitive issues.

V. References and Mini-Bibliography-

APA format should be used to cite references within the paper. If you name the author in your sentence, then follow the authors name with the year in parentheses .For eg.Batras (2005) found that.....

If you do not include the authors name as part of the text, then both the author's name and year are enclosed in parentheses. For eg.one researcher (Batras 2005) found that... ..

A complete bibliography is attached at the end of the paper. It is doubled spaced except single spacing is used for a multiple-line reference. The first line of each reference is intended

Eg. Atkinson, B., & Heath, A. (1990a). Further thoughts on second-order family therapy: This time it's personal. *Family Process*, 29(2), 145-156.

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Generally the formats of the qualitative research proposals are different. Following is the Sections of Typical Qualitative Proposal

1) Introduction

- Introduce topic and significance
- Statement of purpose, research questions/objectives

2) Review of Literature

- Related literature and theoretical traditions

3) Design and Methods

- Overall approach and rationale
- Sampling, data gathering methods, data analysis
- Trustworthiness (Soundness of the research)
- Ethical considerations

4) Dissemination Plan

5) Timeline

6) Budget

7) Appendices

8) Budget

Qualitative Studies are Valuable for Research-Marshall & Rossman, 1999

- That delves in-depth into complexities and processes.
- On little-known phenomena or innovative systems.
- On informal and unstructured processes in organizations.
- That seeks to explore where and why policy and local knowledge and practice are at odds.
- On real, as opposed to stated, organizational goals.
- Research that cannot be done experimentally for practical or ethical reasons.
- For which relevant variables have not been identified.

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