

Chapter 2

Choosing the Right Emic Lens: Exploring Different Qualitative Research Designs and Their Applications

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ABSTRACT

The current study sets out to provide a thorough overview of core qualitative research designs widely deployed in social sciences in general and management science in particular. A scoping review of 160 articles, following PRISMA, was conducted to expose the philosophical underpinnings, key characteristics, and practical applications of each design. The scoping review was geared towards investigating commonly used qualitative research designs through the lens of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. The study general analysis model provides a subtle understanding of the strengths and limitations of each design. Importantly, the study acknowledges the potential challenges associated with each design, such as issues of generalizability and researcher bias. In a few words, this scholarly work aims at arming researchers with the required knowledge to select the most appropriate qualitative research design for their specific research objectives.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been growing interest in qualitative research. Unmistakably, qualitative research diverges from quantitative research in that it prioritizes in-depth exploration of subjective experiences. Under this *Emic* approach, researchers tend to get to the drift of the meaning participants make of their experiences, how they talk about them, and depict the influence of these experiences on subjects in various contexts. Instead of focalising on numbers and measurements, qualitative research sets out to capture the richness and complexity of subjective experiences (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007; Willig, 2012). In stark contrast with quantitative research, qualitative studies zero in on understanding human experience through distinct questions grounded on interpretive, critical, and post-positivist paradigms. It is primordial to note that qualitative research is currently gaining more and more territory at the expense of quantitative research and is commonly used in social sciences in general and management science in more particular.

Background

Qualitative research in management science has been a topic of renewed interest in various fields, including operations management, information science, organizational settings, strategic management, and management accounting. In relation to this, Barratt et al. (2011) discusses the increasing trend towards using qualitative case studies in operations management and accentuates the significant contributions to theory building in the field. On a similar vein, McLeod (2018) introduces the Cynefin Framework as a tool for analysing qualitative data in information science as a viable way to interpret and present qualitative research data effectively for research impact. Pettigrew (2013) underscores the importance of reflecting on the affordances of qualitative research practice to achieve impact in organizational settings. Mukhopadhyay and Gupta (2014) reviews the acceptance and popularity of qualitative research designs in strategic management, and advocate for the incorporation of more qualitative research in the field. Alsharari and Al-Shboul (2019) evaluates qualitative research in management accounting using the criteria of “convincingness,” and shed light on the textual authenticity, plausibility, and criticality of case study findings. In a word, the existing literature on qualitative research in management science demonstrates a growing interest in utilizing qualitative research designs to explore complex phenomena, build theories, and make meaningful contributions to various disciplines within the management field worldwide. However, locally, qualitative research has not found its way to the heart of Moroccan researchers in social sciences and management science in more particular.

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