



Reflection on the Experience of Adopting Qualitative Methodology in Business Management-Based Research

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author HHA designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors AP and MFU managed the analyses of the study. Author MFU managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The brief paper is providing a general reflective overview of different aspects that encounter researchers when adopting qualitative methodology for the purpose of their research within business management fields of study. It is briefly discussing how the researchers developed own epistemological position with details on epistemology, methodology, method, and technique applied during the research. Furthermore, the brief paper includes justification for the position developed based on the nature of the question raised for the intended research. Furthermore, the research included brief reflection on different ethical considerations that should be taken into account during the research process, and outlined possible measures and responses that could be applied by research to avoid ethical issues.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is increasingly important that educators, researchers, and professionals to have ongoing reflection on their prior incidents and experiences (Alharasheh and Pius, 2018), and including key aspects of their own personal insights and feeling to enhance depth in their reflection leading to development of different skills such as research skills, innovation and creativity [1-3]. Furthermore, reflective practice is considered as key to further enhancement and development of professional practice within higher education sittings as well as other sittings such as research [1]. Reflection can enable researchers to have the opportunity to share best practices and associated challenges in relation to a particular contexts [3], and to further enhance their own and others' practice [4,5,6].

Reflecting on the process of conducting this study we may begin with our consideration for the focus group technique. We have considered focus group rather than interview due to our interest to gain further depth in getting what the participants were thinking about, and to have the opportunity to debate the issue further based on the focus of our research. This has enabled us as the facilitators to have further depth and interactivity than just collecting individual responses to our proposed questions. However, this was a bit challenging as we had to engage all participants and distribute time equally amongst them. Furthermore, our challenge in this process was to make deeper sense of their responses, rather than viewing them as series of separate answers, and our aim was to understand the sum of all responses together rather than the individual parts. Another key consideration for us was the process of managing contributions from all participants and avoid one or two dominant individuals to influence all the thinking and participation of the quieter group members. However, we have overcome this challenge by inclusion of all members during the process through body

language and time management for contributions.

2. EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITION DEVELOPED

Epistemology is concerned with the question of what appropriate and acceptable forms of knowledge should be [7,8]. For further clarity, I had to further review and to distinguish key underpinnings of positivism and interpretivism. While positivism is mainly based on objectivity, generalisation, and aims to develop general truth through testing of theories [9,10,11]. Whereas, interpretivism is based on social reality and can be further understood through construction of social aspects such as language and meanings shared, this would further explore human sense making through natural settings [10,11]. Therefore, we could understand that positivism was more about statistical generalisation. whereas, interpretivism was more about deeper understanding based on context.

Our methodology section was very brief. Nevertheless, it has summarised our method adopted as well as the approach to the research. The answer developed was mainly related to our epistemological position, in this case it was interpretivism.

Our method was considered as qualitative, informed by the developed methodology and shaped by the epistemological position developed. However, this could have been further clarified in the methodology section [12,13].

Our developed position was based on the nature of the research question that we had as we aimed to describe and answer question relating to a local context. However, the downside of it was our lack of ability to generalise the findings and was labour as well as time intensive.

Table 1. Epistemological position developed

Epistemology	Interpretivism
Methodology	Qualitative
Method	Interview
Technique	Focus group

Source: (Author developed)

The adopted technique as focus group had its own advantages as the following: Firstly, we had the opportunity to enhance development of comprehensive answers due to the group dynamics available amongst the members, rather than consideration of individual parts if individual interviews were considered. Secondly, we had the opportunity to encourage shy group members as other members were active and reflective, this has enabled us to generate deeper and representative data. This would have been impossible to generate through individual interviews. Thirdly, this technique was considered as efficient in the literature and was widely adopted by similar studies conducted in relation to employability skills development in higher education [14]. However, we have also experienced several disadvantages during the process summarised as the following: Firstly, several responses were less detailed or lacked depth, this challenge was highlighted in the results and discussion sections of the study. Secondly, some respondents agreed with others rather than providing an alternative views and considerations. Thirdly, some powerful participants have taken longer time than others to reflect their views, and this may have resulted in different levels of involvement during the process. Fourthly, we would suppose that through our experience some individuals may feel more comfortable to self-reflect in private than in public [12].

3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Ethical consideration was key in the process of conducting the research as we had to consider key issues such as respect, merits and integrity, and justice in it all means. However, by determining focus group as the technique [15], this may bring more ethical considerations to the process such as the following: Firstly, Data control as we had clear communication with all participants that their views are voluntary, and can freely request us as the facilitators to take out any misrepresented answers they had from our records. Therefore, we have maintained it to be anonymous. However, each participant was coded by number such as P1 and P2 with not mention of names or hints relating to participant, these codes would enable me as the facilitator to determine to whom the answer relate in case any revision or amendment to data was required. Secondly, Confidentiality was maintained to the higher education institution, names of participants, age and workplace. Furthermore,

any other discussions made during the process were not considered and were deleted permanently. Also details of the transcribed data were strictly not shared with anyone and were only used to serve the purpose of the research. Thirdly, we had the challenge of managing contributions in a timely manner. However, one or two powerful individuals were more eager to share their views and felt that they may take valuable time limiting other individuals to equally contribute to the process. Our solution to this was that we as the researchers had to use clear body language and followed a specific timeframe to ensure that all individuals had equal opportunity to contribute and to get their voice heard.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this reflective paper provides some key reflections on our experience using qualitative research methodology in the business management field, highlighting key issues and challenges as well as motivations for pursuing a qualitative methodology rather than a quantitative one. The reflection provided key considerations and steps in developing epistemology, methodology, method, and technique applied during the research, and followed by justifications based on the nature of the study. Furthermore, the reflection included brief considerations in relation to ethics in conducting research with more specific reference to qualitative research adopting interview method. This reflection will be helpful for researchers adopting qualitative methodology for their research by taking into considerations key points such as methodology justification, ethics, and associated challenges to collect data as highlighted throughout.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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