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Grounded Theory Study: A Qualitative Enquiry

Dr. Dibakar Sarangi, *Professor of Education, Mr. Gajanana Behera, Ph.D. Scholar*
DR. P.M.I.A.S.E. *(Nodal Centre) Sambalpur University, Jyoti Vihar*

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Abstract
Qualitative research investigates issues in the actual world and offers answers. There are different approaches to qualitative inquiry, such as narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. However, the most dependable way to generate a theory from evidence is through grounded theory research. Hence, the purpose of this paper was to provide a thorough understanding of the applications of grounded theory, a type of qualitative research methodology. People, very often, misconstrue grounded theory. This paper attempted to dispel this ambiguity. The central idea behind this paper was to discuss the lengthy and systematic process of grounded theory that covered data collection, memoing, constant comparison, theoretical sampling, theoretical sensitivity and data saturation in a precise manner. Additionally, this paper discussed the goals and relevance of grounded theory in different fields. Conducting a grounded theory study is not an easy task for all. Considering the aforementioned, this paper elaborated the drawbacks of grounded theory.

Keywords: Qualitative research, grounded theory, research process

I. Introduction

Human experience can't be expressed numerically all the time. Some of them can be described in a qualitative way. In order to explore the hidden experiences of individuals, qualitative research gives a proper direction. Qualitative research is a systematic inquiry that attempts to explore and explain problems related to social and human problems. There may be certain phenomena, particularly in education, for which there are no existing theories; qualitative research is the most efficient means of providing a final solution in these situations. There are different approaches to qualitative inquiry, such as narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies.

History of Grounded Theory

There is a long history behind the origin of grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss introduced grounded theory for the first time in 1967 with their book "Discovery of Grounded Theory." However, these two began to follow and build their own version of GT. Strauss and Corbin published a book in 1990 that introduced their perception and version of GT (known as the Straussian method). Their book was titled "Basics of Qualitative Research, 1st Ed." Two years later, Glaser (1992) expanded on GT in his new work (Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis) and questioned Strauss and Corbin's version and attitude towards GT. However, Strauss and Corbin (1998), on the other hand, published the second edition of their book, which included an updated version of GT and enhanced coding systems. Since 1998, various authors have contributed to the GT discussion and established fresh ideas in this field (for example, Charmaz (2006) and Corbin and Strauss (2008).

Meaning of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a qualitative method that allows one to explore a specific event or process while also discovering new theories based on real-world data collection and analysis. In contrast to standard hypothesis-deductive research methods, which involve formulating a hypothesis and then attempting to prove or disprove it, grounded theory is an inductive strategy in which new theories are formed from data. Data gathering, analysis, and theory formulation occur repeatedly. An iterative data gathering and analysis occurs until theoretical saturation, the point at which additional data does not contribute any additional insight into new theory. Conventional research investigation typically begins with a literature evaluation, which leads to the development of a hypothesis. This idea is then put to the test through real-world experimentation. Grounded Theory, on the other hand, studies real-world phenomena and analyses data without pre-existing beliefs (Glaser and Struss, 1967).

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When to use grounded theory?

Grounded theory is used when there is no theory that explains a phenomenon being studied. It can also be used when a theory exists, but it may be incomplete because the data used to derive that theory was not collected from the group of participants for whom the research was conducted.

Misconception about Grounded Theory

Most of us have a misconception regarding theory: that grounded theory is a theory. But, in reality, it is not a theory but rather a method for building data-driven theory, hence the term grounded theory. The researcher uses the grounded theory approach to collect and evaluate qualitative data in a specific manner, resulting in a theoretical explanation for the phenomenon under investigation. This theoretical explanation must be substantiated or based on the data gathered.

Goals of grounded theory study

The primary goal of grounded theory is to provide appropriate guidance to the investigator in developing a theory or modifying an existing theory. The evidence gathered for the development of a theory from various sources using a grounded theory examination is more reliable. Grounded theory research follows a logical procedure and collects evidence from different sources, ensuring the construction of a good theory. The method of applying grounded theory to theory generation unquestionably improves its quality. It also aims to use more data in order to attain theoretical sensitivity through theoretical sampling.

Process of grounded theory

Generally, process refers to an order or steps required to carry out an activity that leads to an effective outcome. Grounded theory follows a lengthy and systematic process that covered data collection, memoing, constant comparison, theoretical sampling, theoretical sensitivity and data saturation. All these were discussed below-

Data Collection

One essential component of the grounded theory investigation is data. Since data is the sole source that can enable the researcher to produce anything they desire, grounded theory allows for the collection of data from various sources. Along with observations and interviews, other sources of information include talks, seminars, expert group gatherings, newspaper articles, casual interviews, television programs, etc.

Coding

The art of coding in grounded theory typically entails a series of actions. First, the researcher performs open-coding on the data. This involves examining the data to find initial concepts that appear to be significant, as well as prospective labels indicating their significance for the event or process under consideration. During the open-coding process, the researcher will likely add subcategories to provide a more thorough understanding of what each category may contain. Following that, axial coding will examine the open codes and identify connections between them, allowing us to begin grouping codes that share a relationship. Finally, selective or theoretical coding examines how the relationships between these notions intersect, resulting in a hypothesis that explains how this event or series of events occurs.

Constant Comparison

The analytical process known as "constant comparison" generates concepts by comparing and contrasting every relevant piece of data (Corbin and Struss, 2008). Continuous coding and documentation of concentrated data enables constant comparative analysis techniques to choose the newly identified phenomena (Glaser and Struss, 1967). These are induction processes.

Memo Writing

Throughout the coding and ongoing comparison process, memos are made to find any possible similarities within and between codes. Grounded theory memo writing facilitates the organization of ideas about the linkages between the data and the patterns and emergent relationships between codes (Glaser & Struss, 1967). Memos have four functions: they raise data to a conceptual level by expressing ideas; they facilitate idea sorting and reworking; they create a catalogue of memos that can be used as a source for theoretical writing; and finally, they are easily structured.

Theoretical Sampling

The technique of obtaining additional data based on the findings of earlier investigations is known as theoretical sampling. It aims to systematically gather fresh data so that it can analyse new trends. Most importantly, fresh data is now utilized to confirm, support, or contradict emerging trends and to flag out areas in the data analysis that need more research. Selecting a good sample that extends the phenomena found in previous research approaches is necessary for theoretical sampling. GT analysts employ theoretical sampling to produce and build emergent

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concepts or substantive theories based on pertinent facts when the previous research technique produces no appealing concepts (Charmaz, 2014).

Theoretical Sensitivity

The capacity for abstract interpretation and conceptualization of phenomena is known as theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity is a basic quality that grounded theorists need to have in order to comprehend the data that they have analysed and identify emerging concepts through constant comparison, according to Glaser (1992). When pursuing theoretical understanding, researchers can more effectively convey the analytical process by cultivating their theoretical sensitivity (Charmaaz, 2014). Researchers may find it difficult to complete grounded theory tasks and struggle with theoretical coding processes if they lack conceptual competency (Glaser, 1992). Because of this, theoretical sensitivity is required in order to determine if a researcher is eligible to carry out a grounded theory study.

Data Saturation

In order to explain a phenomenon, grounded theorists must gather data phase-by-phase. They also gather data in order to develop a theory. The development of theories occurs simultaneously with the collection of data. When no fresh or pertinent data regarding the newly developed theory emerges, the data collection process is said to be saturated. Hence, a researcher looks at this as the point at which no more data needs to be collected. Saturation has been reached when the theory seems solid, with no gaps or unexplained phenomena, making the resulting theory easier to create. If the researcher does not attain data saturation, any resulting theory may be unbalanced, incomplete, and essentially untrustworthy. As a result, the data collection process is considered complete only when saturation has been achieved.

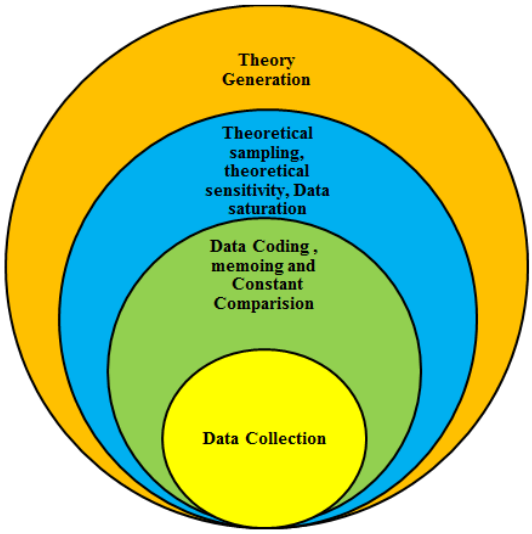

Fig: Process of grounded Theory

Implications of grounded theory

Considering the significance of grounded theory, it can be applied in various fields such as information, women's studies, politics, management, and education. It is also helpful for analysing human experiences and psychology. Grounded theory is a qualitative method that relies on relevant data collected through different phases and presents a reliable theory. Finally, it can be used for the generation of theory inductively

Drawbacks of Grounded Theory

As the coin has two different sides. A grounded theory study is not free from demerits or disadvantages.

- Although a grounded theory study follows a systematic process to generate a theory, in practice, it's a challenge for researchers to go through all these.
- Unlike quantitative research, this theory does not depend on the size of the sample. Hence, moving towards the collection of data a number of times poses a question for researchers that requires a strong thought process.
- The grounded theory process needs competent researchers with sound ideas.
- Transcription of data from interviews is a time-consuming method that everybody doesn't prefer to follow.
- Assigning codes and deriving sub-categories, core-categories, and themes and putting them in a coding frame needs skills that everyone doesn't possess.

- From the collection of data to theoretical saturation is a difficult journey that may discourage researchers' constant involvement.

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