

Review Article

A Critical Review of Qualitative Research Methods by Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey

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Abstract

This book review critically examines the *Qualitative Research Methods* by Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, evaluating its theoretical foundations, methodological approaches, and practical contributions to qualitative research. In our review, the book offers clear guidance on interpretivist approaches, grounded theory, thematic analysis, and ethical considerations. This book review provides comparative analysis and highlights the book's strength and weakness, particularly in the context of contemporary qualitative research issues, and provides recommendations for researchers based on their specific needs. The review also makes comparisons with other key texts by Creswell, Braun & Clarke, and Patton highlight the book's strengths in accessibility and ethical rigor, while noting limitations in its coverage of methodologies like ethnography and advanced data analysis. In our review, we found that the authors are highly experienced in qualitative research and their book may provide an opportunity to improve our understanding of qualitative research design and implementation when compared to other different qualitative books. The authors present their method of thematic analysis as well as some practical strategies for successfully conducting qualitative research. The book is user-friendly and contains practical advice that may appeal to both novices and experienced researchers alike. Overall, it is a valuable resource for researchers, especially those new to qualitative methods, though supplementary resources may be required for comprehensive mastery of certain topics.

Keywords

Qualitative Research, Book Review, Theoretical Analysis

1. Introduction

Research methods continue to grow and develop in exciting new ways, through experience, interdisciplinary conversation, new technologies, and in response to new needs. Qualitative research serves a critical role in understanding human behaviors in social science studies. Qualitative research serves as methodological bedrock for understanding complex social phenomena, enabling researchers to explore nuanced human experiences. Qualitative research is rapidly

evolving with new methods and approaches such as digital and social media research. As a result, new books and journals with qualitative approach and findings are released on a regular basis. *Qualitative Research Methods* by Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, is an authoritative guide to conducting qualitative research. The second edition builds upon the foundational concepts of qualitative research while incorporating newer methodologies, reflecting ad-

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vancements in the field. Its clarity, structured approach, and comprehensive coverage make it an ideal resource for both novice and experienced researchers in the social sciences. The purpose of this review is to evaluate the book's strengths, weaknesses, and contributions to qualitative research by providing a detailed theoretical analysis. This review will also compare Hennink et al.'s work with other key texts in qualitative research, such as *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* by [4]. These comparisons will help contextualize the book's unique features and examine its relevance within the broader landscape of qualitative research.

The reason why we choose the book for critical review was due to the following justifications. First, the book is simple to use as guidance to novice and expert researchers, scholars in field of social sciences the book provides a deeper grasp of the process of conducting a qualitative research inquiry in social science. The second justification due the fact that the book is recently published we can get contemporary arguments as well as research approaches and, because this book was published in 2020, it provides a wonderful opportunity to see contemporary qualitative research trends and changes from both theoretical and empirical viewpoints. Finally, this book is useful for researchers and students from different academic disciplines who want to learn the process of conducting qualitative research. The book discusses the theoretical principles as well as the practical application of qualitative research.

2. Book Content

The book outlines theoretical foundations such as interpretive and positivist paradigms, along with ontological and epistemological underpinnings of qualitative research. It provides criteria for assessing research quality and includes examples suitable for novice researchers. The structure is divided into three parts: the design cycle, data collection cycle, and analytic cycle. The first part, design cycle introduces how to use inductive and deductive reasoning in research design, focusing on formulating research questions, reviewing literature, developing conceptual frameworks, and selecting methods. This part has five chapters; chapter 3 discusses research questions and conceptual frameworks, while chapter 4 emphasizes integrating participatory research approaches. The chapter also highlights the importance of community engagement and the researcher's role in fostering social change and chapter 5 addresses ethical issues, emphasizing informed consent, confidentiality, and minimizing harm. The second part of this book is the data collection cycle which cover chapter 6, 7, 8 and 9. This section focuses on designing research instruments, recruiting participants, and data collection methods. It highlights sampling strategies, participant recruitment (including snowballing and gatekeeping), and the principle of data saturation, which refers to the point when no new data emerge. Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9 discuss various data collection techniques such as purposive

sampling, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observation, emphasizing the importance of rapport-building and context in qualitative research.

The third part of the book is the analytic cycle: This section covers data preparation, coding, and analysis, including inductive and deductive techniques. Chapter 10 introduces different approaches like narrative, case study, discourse, content analysis, and grounded theory. Chapter 11 details analytic tasks such as description, comparison, categorization, and theory development. Chapter 12 explores how to translate analysis into social action, validating findings through stakeholder collaboration. Chapter 13 addresses writing and presenting findings, emphasizing clarity and transparency in qualitative research. The book concludes with a reflection on the importance of assessing the quality of qualitative research, highlighting the need for transparency and methodological rigor in reporting research procedures and decisions.

Theoretical Analysis

The book takes a pragmatic, interpretivist stance on qualitative research, asserting that reality is socially constructed through human interactions and experiences. This aligns with the broader philosophy of social constructivism, championed by scholars like [13], who emphasized that individuals develop knowledge through social engagement and interaction. The interpretivist approach is a natural fit for qualitative research, as it prioritizes understanding phenomena from the participants' perspectives, an idea central to the work of [5]. In this way, the book emphasizes that qualitative research seeks to explore meaning and experience rather than test hypotheses or generalize findings. A core theoretical framework presented in the book is grounded theory, a methodological approach that seeks to build theory inductively through data collection and analysis. This method is well-represented in the book's second edition, with the authors focusing on [3] constructivist version of grounded theory. According to [3], grounded theory should not merely be about generating abstract, universal laws, but rather about creating a theory that is relevant to the specific contexts in which the research occurs. [9] discuss the key features of this approach, particularly its emphasis on researcher reflexivity and the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participants. The authors' approach to grounded theory encourages readers to keep an open mind and let theories emerge organically from the data, rather than imposing preconceived ideas on the research process.

In addition to grounded theory, the book covers several other qualitative data analysis techniques, with particular emphasis on thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is presented as a flexible and widely applicable method for analyzing qualitative data, and the authors adopt [1] framework for conducting this analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying and interpreting patterns, or "themes," within the data, a process that is explained in detail with step-by-step guidance on coding, categorizing, and interpreting the findings. This method is particularly useful for novice researchers as it

is relatively straightforward to apply, while still allowing for nuanced interpretations of complex data.

Another notable contribution of the book is its focus on participatory and action-oriented research methodologies. Participatory research approaches, which involve participants in the design, data collection, and analysis phases of the research process, are increasingly recognized as valuable for producing socially relevant knowledge. This emphasis on participatory research aligns with contemporary trends in qualitative research that focus on empowering marginalized communities and fostering collaboration between researchers and participants [10]. The authors argue that participatory research can lead to deeper insights into social issues by drawing on the lived experiences and expertise of the participants, while also making the research process more democratic.

Ethical considerations are another areas in which [9, 15] provide significant insight. Ethical rigor is a key aspect of qualitative research, and the authors explore various dimensions of research ethics, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and participant privacy. They draw on the work of [8], who emphasizes the importance of reflexivity researchers must continuously assess how their personal beliefs, biases, and relationships with participants influence the research process. [9] highlight that; qualitative researchers must not only focus on the ethical treatment of participants but also engage critically with the potential power dynamics at play in the research process. Additionally, the book reflects the principles of feminist and postcolonial research, which advocate for the inclusion of marginalized voices and the disruption of traditional power structures in research [5]. This is especially relevant in the current climate, where the field of qualitative research is increasingly called upon to contribute to social justice by addressing issues such as inequality, oppression, and marginalization.

3. Reviewers' Evaluation

We usually engage with a book critically by reading it thoroughly from start to finish, taking note of particularly impactful sections, and then assessing its strengths and weaknesses. One of the book's greatest strengths is its clarity and accessibility. The book presents complex qualitative methodologies in a clear, understandable format, making it suitable for beginners who may be unfamiliar with research theory and methods. The authors provide detailed explanations of qualitative research designs, data collection techniques, and analytical approaches, breaking each stage of the process into manageable steps. The step-by-step instructions are particularly useful for readers who are new to qualitative research and might feel overwhelmed by its complexity. The book excels in its comprehensive coverage of ethical issues in qualitative research. Ethical considerations are addressed at every stage of the research process, ensuring that readers understand the importance of maintaining integrity and sen-

sitivity when working with human participants. [9] Under-score that ethical research is not just about adhering to institutional review board (IRB) requirements but is embedded in the ongoing process of conducting research. Researchers are encouraged to reflect on their role in the research process and to be aware of their power in shaping the narratives of their participants. This focus on reflexivity and power dynamics in research is a strength that aligns the book with current trends in qualitative inquiry [2]. The other strength of the book is its practical orientation. The authors supplement theoretical discussions with case studies and real-world examples that demonstrate how qualitative research methods can be applied to practical research questions. This integration of theory and practice is invaluable, as it helps bridge the gap between abstract methodologies and their real-world applications. The case studies also show how the methods can be adapted to diverse contexts and populations, making the book versatile and applicable across disciplines. Moreover, the book's emphasis on participatory research methods, which actively involve participants in the research process, is particularly noteworthy. By aligning with contemporary movements in social justice research [12, 6], the authors advocate for a shift toward more inclusive, collaborative approaches to research. This is an essential strength in today's research landscape, where the voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups are increasingly being highlighted.

While the book is comprehensive, it does have several limitations. One significant weakness is its limited treatment of some qualitative research methodologies, particularly ethnography and phenomenology. These approaches are central to qualitative research and have long been used to study social behaviors, cultures, and individual experiences. However, [9] dedicate relatively little attention to these methods, offering only brief overviews. Ethnography, for instance, is a key methodology used for studying cultures and subcultures, yet the book does not explore the practicalities of ethnographic fieldwork in detail.

Additionally, while the book offers a strong introduction to data collection and analysis techniques, it provides only a brief discussion of more advanced analysis methods such as discourse analysis, narrative analysis, and content analysis. These techniques are crucial for scholars dealing with more complex or large-scale qualitative data sets. Researchers interested in these methods may find the book's treatment of them insufficient, which may require them to seek out more specialized texts or guides. Another weakness is the book's reliance on Western case studies. While the examples provided are useful for understanding the application of qualitative methods, they may not fully address the unique challenges of conducting research in non-Western or postcolonial contexts. As qualitative research becomes increasingly global, it would be beneficial for the book to include more diverse case studies, particularly those focused on research conducted in non-Western societies [8]. The book could also benefit from more detailed discussion of how researchers can

adapt qualitative methodologies to different cultural settings and ethical frameworks.

Finally, although the authors provide clear guidance on data coding and analysis, they do not sufficiently engage with the complexities that arise when dealing with large and diverse data sets. For instance, handling contradictory themes, dealing with non-verbal data, or managing conflicting perspectives among participants are issues that often arise in qualitative research. Further exploration of these challenges would make the book more valuable for experienced researchers working with complex data.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions to the Book

In conclusion, *Qualitative Research Methods* by [9] is an excellent resource for understanding and applying qualitative research methods. It is particularly useful for beginners, thanks to its clear, accessible language and structured approach. The book's comprehensive treatment of ethical considerations, its practical orientation, and its focus on participatory research make it a valuable addition to the field of qualitative research. However, the book's limited coverage of certain methodologies, such as ethnography and phenomenology, and its reliance on Western case studies, represent notable gaps. Furthermore, the book could benefit from a deeper exploration of advanced analysis techniques and the complexities of working with large qualitative data sets. When compared with other key texts in qualitative research, such as *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* [9], *Successful Qualitative Research* [1, 7], *Researching Lived Experience* [13], the *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* [14] and *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* [11, 9] Provide a more focused and practical guide. Their emphasis on reflexivity, ethical considerations, and participatory research is aligned with current trends in qualitative inquiry and makes the book an important resource for researchers across disciplines. Moreover, we would like to appreciate if the following issues are improved. First, all paragraphs of the book are not well justified and this would make the book less attractive for readers. Hence, the book needs editing. Secondly, the book addresses only the following qualitative research approaches; narratives analysis, case analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis, and content analysis. But, the book should include other methodologies such as phenomenology, conversational analysis and ethnography. Lastly, as social research methodologies remain to grow, the issues related to participatory action research, community based participatory research; social justice research should be incorporated in future editions. With these minor suggestions aside, we highly recommend this book for qualitative research course educators and researchers who are looking for advice in a deeper knowledge of qualitative research. The book is used as a useful and well organized text for learning

fundamental qualitative research methods both for self-study and in an organized classroom setting.

Abbreviations

IRB Institutional Review Board

Author Contributions

Niway Ayalew Adimasu: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Kenenisa Lemi Debela: Supervision

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Biography

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Kenenisa Lemi Debela is an accomplished academician, researcher, and leader. He earned both his BA and MBA from Jimma University and completed his PhD in Management Studies at Punjabi University in India in 2016. With over 22 published articles, he currently serves as an Associate Professor of Management at Jimma University, Ethiopia.