



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

International Journal of Current Research
Vol. 11, Issue, 02, pp.1025-1029, February, 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24941/ijcr.33797.02.2019>

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH**

RESEARCH ARTICLE

SUITABLE RESEARCH METHODS FOR INFORMAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 05th November, 2018

Received in revised form

30th December, 2018

Accepted 15th January, 2019

Published online 28th February, 2019

Key Words:

Case Study, Snowball Sampling, Interview, Observation, Thematic Analysis.

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Citation: Aamar Ilyas and Dr. Ramraini Binti Ali Hassan, 2019. "Suitable research methods for informal entrepreneurship", International Journal of Current Research, 11, (02), 1025-1029.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to justify the rationales of methodology that is used to investigate the practices of the informal entrepreneurship. First of all, review the previous methods, both direct and indirect, that have been employed to examine the practices of informal entrepreneurship. Direct approach is the most suitable method that is designed to produce data from informal entrepreneurship and this method has also aptitude to explore the nature of informal entrepreneurship such as in terms of income level, employment status, distribution of gender, ethnicity, or determinants of informality. Respondents are informal entrepreneurs who are working in informal entrepreneurship sector. Snowball sampling technique is a decent technique to explore the nature of informal work such as employment status, motives or reasoning to join this sphere. However, the prime source of data collection will be interview, direct observation, documents, and archival sources for this field because it allows having one-to-one contact with participants. Therefore, evaluate the thematic analysis is better fit for this field and interpretive phenomenological analysis is unsuitable.

INTRODUCTION

Today, entrepreneurship is preserved as a significant power that crafts many jobs in both, public and private, sectors and improves the level of productivity (Hitt *et al.*, 2001). Informal practices had been explored in only economic domain, but recently management and entrepreneurship dominos also ongoing to assess the nature of informal practices (Thai and Turkina, 2014; Webb *et al.*, 2014). Many scholars had investigated the size, motives, nature, and working conditions of informal economy. It has been a very difficult task to measure the magnitude and practices of the informal economy for academic researchers and policy makers. There are many different methods have been used to study informal work, it is entirely depending on available data bank and information. However, there is no study available that guide the new researcher about which methods are preferable during investigation of informal entrepreneurship. Perren and Ram (2004) stated in their book that entrepreneurship can be examined via a different type of methods, including qualitative and quantitative. But this field is still faced methodological rigour and diversity (Churchill and Bygrave, 1989). The question in mind is 'Which technique we undertake during the investigation of informal entrepreneurship?'. With the reference of qualitative research approach, the research design appropriate to informal entrepreneurship is the case study. Case study defines as an exploration of a bounded system or a case or multiple case over time through detailed in depth data collection methods (Creswell, 1998). According to Gray (2009), case study is more specific in its focus but can explore

many themes and subjects and it can also be utilized for a variety of issues. Case study can refer to a process, an event, an activity, a program, an individual, a city, a province, a state, a market, or a group of people (Yin, 2011; Babbie, 2001). This field concerned referred to a group of people (entrepreneurs who are working in the informal entrepreneurship). After reviewing massive research on case study research methodology, design and its application, (e.g. Flybjerg, 2006; Weiss, 1994; Creswell, 2009; Small, 2008, 2009; Yin, 1998, 2003, 2009, 2012), decided a single-case study research methodology for this study because this research strategy has been increasingly employed as a research tool (e.g., Yin, 2009; Perry and Kraemer, 1986; Hamel, 1992) in different fields such as business (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 1995), political science, psychology and sociology (Gilgun, 1994), particularly given that we are capturing informal activities that outside the public census, governmental agencies and, as a result, hide from state (e.g., Hondagnue-Sotelo, 2001; Cornelius, 1982). However, Yin (2003, 2009) discussed three conditions – (a) type of research question (b) control of behavioral events (c) contemporary events in his famous book to choose the research strategy. This strategy, case study, is favored if questions of research study mainly focus on why and how, study investigating contemporary events and investigators have no control on behavioral events (Yin, 57 2003, 2009). This field meets all the above conditions so case study is preferred to other strategies. Yin (2009), eminently regarded as specialist on case study approach, presents the five rationales for single case study method, these show that this type of research strategy is extremely appropriate for research design (Yin,

2003, 2009). Flyvbjerg (2006) challenges this misconceptions and conventional wisdom of case study method. Flyvbjerg discussed five misleading of that method and provides evidence about case study, as an adequate method in social sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2006). There are many different methods have been used to study informal work, it is entirely depending on available data bank and information. These methods can be classified into two core groups that are indirect and direct methods. First group of academics who realize that direct approach is not appropriate method to study the informal economy because respondents will not give honest response. These scholars to find some evidence about informal work from already collected data such as discrepancies in accounts, difference between income and expenditure and monetary methods. Second, there are those researchers who have objections on indirect methods. They believe on direct survey with respondents, firms or households. The following section has explained the indirect methods used to measure the size and nature of informal activities in advance and emerging economies.

Indirect Methods: Proponents of indirect methods are skeptical and doubtful about the accuracy, reliability and credibility of data acquired through direct survey. Such commentators rely on macroeconomic level data that was collected for other purposes and/or find the magnitude of the informal economy, but such data did not include the motives and characteristics of informal work. The different types of indirect methods have been used in international literature to measure the size and nature of informal economy such as discrepancy method, labour force estimate/ labour input method, Tanzi method, Latent variable method, degree of participation and electricity consumption. GHK and Fondazione G. Brodolini (2009) presented these methods in two types. There are major issues with indirect methods is that these approaches provide an unclear estimation of the size of informal economy and specially these do not disclose the exact information about nature of informal economy such as its character, structure and motives of entrepreneurs and workers. Moreover, such information is not practicable for making a policy to cope the level of informality (Pfau-Effinger, 2009; Thomas, 1999).

Direct Methods: Direct methods have been used to measure the size and nature of the informal economy. These are micro-economic methods that provide an opportunity for scholars to direct contact with participants who are working in informal sector and researchers pay attention to their stories. Versatility data have been collected from the horse's mouth via survey. This approach has high popularity in emerging and advanced nations because this method provides in depth and accurate information. In depth information is very beneficial to researchers and policy makers because this approach provides deeper understanding about the nature of the informal entrepreneurship and developing the effective policies to tackle it. Majority of researchers have been used this approach in following studies in different nations such as in Italy (Baculo, 2001), Sweden (Jonsson, 2001), Canada (Fortin, Garneau, Lacroix, Lemieux, and Montmarquette, 1996), the Netherlands (Renooy *et al.*, 2004; Van Eck and Kazmeier, 1985), the USA (Nelson and Smith, 1999; Jensen *et al.*, 1996), in UK (Pahl, 1984; Williams, 2004) Pakistan (Burki and Afaqi, 1996). A variety of methods has been used to data collection such as face to face interview (e.g. Fortin *et al.*, 1996), telephonic interviews unstructured (e.g. Howe, 1998), mail-shot

questionnaire (e.g. Jonsson, 2001) or structured interviews (e.g. European commission, 2006; William and Windebank, 2001).

Rationale of Direct Survey Method: On the basis of above discussion, direct method has been chosen to be employed in this thesis. This section explains the appropriateness of direct method and also discusses its feasibility. Presently, some proponents have been recognized that this method is more reliable and accurate technique to measure the characteristics of informal economy, which are being criticized by some academician for their validity (e.g., Tanzi, 1999; Thomas, 1998; Williams and Windebank, 1998; Williams, 2006). Direct approach is the most suitable method that is designed to produce data from underground economy and this method has also aptitude to explore the nature of informal economy such as in terms of income level, employment status, distribution of gender, ethnicity, linkage between informal with formal economy or determinants of informality. These types of information are collected from direct communication with the participants of the informal economy. Policy makers community has provided strong consensus that they do not only provide comprehensive facts on informal work but also offers the better estimates of magnitude of the informal economy. It is also concluded by European Commission Report (Renooy *et al.*, 2004) and OECD experts write a book on measurement methods of informal economy.

Sampling: For the purpose of data collection, target population has comprised of micro and small. The unit of analysis is the individual. Respondents are informal entrepreneurs or workers who are working in informal entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, there is no exact statistics available about small and micro enterprises. These informants are identifying with the help of snowball sampling technique. Rationales of snowball sampling technique are given in next section. Sample size is important element in every research, it determines from many ways. Sample size is large in quantitative research but in qualitative research sample size is small. Griffin and Hauser (1993) suggest 20-30 sample size for those studies based on in-depth interviews. If population is homogenous then 12 in-depth interviews are sufficient (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006). Guru of qualitative research Cresswell (2007) has suggested interviews range between 25 to 30 (Cresswell, 1998). Case study guru Robert Yin (2003) also recommends 25 sample size in case study research method. Finally, the sample size of 30 will be proposed for this field because the population of this field is homogenous. When sample size finalized then time to select the most appropriate sampling strategy according to research questions and objectives. Conventional random sampling methods are not feasible for this study because the absence of census data and the legal status of this informal cluster (Corneilius, 1982). Saunders *et al.* (2011) stated in their book that when researchers have difficulty to recognize the desire subject of population then snowball sampling is feasible technique to meet the research objectives. Saunders *et al.* (2009) have been provided a list of steps to use this approach that are; First of all, to develop contact with one or two cases in population, Develop the new contact list through ask from exiting cases, ask these new cases to develop additional new cases (and so on). When no new contact added then stops to asking further links. Informants were selected via snowball sampling technique that adopted for this field. This approach is more convenient for undertaking research on sensitive issues, feasible for small sample size and to get access to hidden

population (Hendricks and Blanken, 1992; Lambert and Wiebel, 1990). Snowball sampling method is basically used to sample out people with particular information, knowledge and characteristics. Dabney and Berg (1994) stated that the sample eventually snowballs from a few subjects to many subjects. Researchers have surveyed with few participants to desired sample size which needed to meet research objectives. This sampling technique is well known for its low cost and little time since it creates it easier for researchers to identify their subjects through referrals. Important element of this technique is this exploring the sensitive, deviance topics and to access those population which are not easily to identify Lee (1993). Respondents are informal entrepreneurs who are working in informal entrepreneurship sector. These informants will be identifying with the help of snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling technique is a decent technique to explore the nature of informal work such as employment status, motives or reasoning to join this sphere.

Data Collection Tools: Robert Yin (2003) has explained six different sources of data collection which used in case study that are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participants-observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2003). Interview technique is a decent method to explore the nature of informal work such as employment status, gender, motivation or reasoning to join this sphere. Documentation and archival methods also use for this field because these sources also provide the in-depth knowledge about the nature of informal entrepreneurship and provides some information about motives behind the informality. Definitely, documents and archival sources are helpful to identify the actual name, title of an enterprise, and it also provides some guidelines for new questions. New researcher of this field will use the variety of documents such as letters, news clippings, correspondence, personal documents like diaries and notes, and internal records. Direct observation will also use for collection of evidence about the nature of informal entrepreneurship. Direct observation provides opportunity to explore the informal activities, working conditions, dealing with stakeholders, and behaviors of field workers. However, the prime source of data collection will be interview for this field because it allows having one-to-one contact with participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Yin (2011) has depicted three principles of data collection. When these principles will use correctly, it can be helpful in developing the validity and reliability of evidence. These principles are; use multiple sources of evidence, create a case study database, and maintain a chain of evidence. This field will follow the above three principles during data collection due to enhance the reliability and validity of its data.

Reliability and Validity: The reliability and validity in qualitative studies can be assessed by its trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have been discussed several constructs in their study including: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Kidder and Judd (1986) also discussed four tests, construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability, which are commonly used in social science methods.

Rationale Data Analysis Approach: De Vos *et al.* (2005) stated that qualitative data analysis is the process that follows data collection; the data transformed into meaningful findings. In qualitative data analysis does not follow a linear format but reflects a spiral image that is not fixed. In fact, Marshall and

Rossmann (2006) mentioned in his study that in qualitative study data collection and data analysis go hand in hand to build a logical interpretation. Guest *et al.*, (2012) have been mentioned different approaches to data collection for qualitative and many techniques for analysis such as epistemological, disciplinary and theoretical viewpoints. The selection of suitable method for data analysis is important part of research process because to attain a clearer picture on the basis of smaller amount of information/ experiences of participant (Guest *et al.*, 2012). This field going to select one method for analysis from following methods; grounded theory, discourse analysis, (IPA) interpretive phenomenological analysis, and finally thematic analysis. According to Holloway and Todres (2003), overlap exist in above mentioned qualitative methods especially thematic and interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) but Johnson *et al.*, (2004) stated that the choice of appropriate approach for analysis is based upon the objective and research question of this field (Johnson *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, Wilkinson and Silverman, (2004) mentioned that thematic analysis is appropriate for smaller sample size and delivered a qualitative context for exploratory (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012). Thematic analysis has few similarities with interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) such as both explored in detail, covered the lived experiences of participants, and entering in to the field for depth data gathering. Some scholars have been challenged these similarities (e.g. Collins and Nicolson, 2002), they think that interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is different from thematic analysis. Here are few differences between thematic analysis and IPA, which leads to choose the thematic analysis rather than interpretive phenomenological analysis. Guest *et al.*, (2012) stated that in IPA exclusively...focuses on subjective human experiences..., ...It concerned with individuals' subjective reports..., ...enter the life world of each participant... and create a narrative account (Kay and Kingston, 2002; Brocki and Wearden, 2006), while selected approach can focus broader scope. ...thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set – be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts – to find repeated patterns of meaning... (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and the primary focus of thematic analysis is on commonalities/themes through entire data set than the depth of single participants interview/experience (Huxley, Clarke, and Halliwell, 2011). Therefore, evaluate the thematic analysis is better fit for this field and interpretive phenomenological analysis is unsuitable.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the value of qualitative and direct method of data collection in the field of informal entrepreneurship. Direct method is a good, accurate and precise method to collect the information and subjective evidence of informants. Direct approach is the most suitable method that is designed to produce data from informal entrepreneurship and this method has also aptitude to explore the nature of informal entrepreneurship such as in terms of income level, employment status, distribution of gender, ethnicity, or determinants of informality. Respondents are informal entrepreneurs who are working in informal entrepreneurship sector. Careful sampling pays attention to what can/can't be regulated in terms of attributes of cases, events, or situations. Random sampling methods are not feasible for this study because the absence of census data and the legal status of this informal cluster. When researchers have

difficulty to recognize the desire subject of population then snowball sampling is feasible technique to meet the requirement of this field. Informants will be selected via snowball sampling technique that adopted for this field. This approach is more convenient for undertaking research on sensitive issues, feasible for small sample size and to get access to hidden population (Hendricks and Blanken, 1992; Lambert and Wiebel, 1990). Snowball sampling method is basically used to sample out people with particular information, knowledge and characteristics. These informants will be identifying with the help of snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling technique is a decent technique to explore the nature of informal work such as employment status, motives or reasoning to join this sphere. Interview technique is a decent method to explore the nature of informal work such as employment status, gender, motivation or reasoning to join this sphere. Documentation and archival methods also use for this field because these sources also provide the in-depth knowledge about the nature of informal entrepreneurship and provides some information about motives behind the informality. Direct observation provides opportunity to explore the informal activities, working conditions, dealing with stakeholders, and behaviors of field workers. However, the prime source of data collection will be interview for this field because it allows having one-to-one contact with participants. Qualitative data analysis is the process that follows data collection; the data transformed into meaningful findings. In qualitative data analysis does not follow a linear format but reflects a spiral image that is not fixed. In fact, qualitative study data collection and data analysis go hand in hand to build a logical interpretation. The selection of suitable method for data analysis is important part of research process because to attain a clearer picture on the basis of smaller amount of information/experiences of participant. The primary focus of thematic analysis is on commonalities/themes through entire data set than the depth of single participants interview/experience. Therefore, evaluate the thematic analysis is better fit for this field and interpretive phenomenological analysis is unsuitable.

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