

Research Methodology in a Feminist Perspective

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Fundamentals of Research

Research is a logical and systematic search for knowledge, that is, a discovery of hidden truths. Here knowledge means information about matters. The information might be collected from different sources like experience, human beings, books, journals, nature, etc.

A research can lead to new contributions to the existing knowledge. Only through research is it possible to make progress in a field.

Research is indeed civilization and determines the economic, social and political development of a nation.

Cont...

Research has to be an active, diligent and systematic process of inquiry in order to discover, interpret or revise facts, events, behaviors and theories.

Applying the outcome of research for the refinement of knowledge in other subjects, or in enhancing the quality of human life also becomes a kind of research and development.

Meaning of Research

Research is a voyage of discovery –unfolding truth by systematic scientific search for pertinent information on a specific topic. Research is considered to be a formal, systematic, and intensive process of fact finding, experimentation, analysis of data and arriving at valid conclusions.

Steps in Research Process

- Identity the research problem
- Review of literature
- Designing research
- Data collection
- Analysis and Interpretation
- Conclusion
- Suggestions

Objectives of Research

- To discover new facts
- To verify and test important facts
- To analyze an event or process or phenomenon to identify the cause and effect relationship
- To develop new scientific tools, concepts and theories to solve and understand scientific and nonscientific problems
- To find solutions to scientific, nonscientific and social problems
- To overcome or solve the problems occurring in our everyday life

Research Methodology

Research methodology explains the overarching theoretical and philosophical frameworks which guide the research. Research methodology works as a framework within which the researcher works. It is even accurate to consider it as the inception of the research. For various researches, the researcher can employ different methodologies. This will allow the person to look at the research problem from different angles and use different methods, techniques and even perspectives

RESEARCH APPROACHES

- Quantitative research
- Qualitative research
- Pragmatic approach to research
- Advocacy/participatory approach to research

Quantitative research

Quantitative research is generally associated with the positivist/post positivist paradigm. It usually involves collecting and converting data into numerical form so that statistical calculations can be made and conclusions drawn

Qualitative research

Qualitative research is the approach usually associated with the social constructivist paradigm which emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality. It is about recording, analyzing and attempting to uncover the deeper meaning and significance of human behaviours and experience, including contradictory beliefs, behaviours and emotions.

Applied Versus Fundamental

Research can also be applied or fundamental in nature. An attempt to find a solution to an immediate problem encountered by a firm, an industry, a business organisation, or the society is known as applied research. Researchers engaged in such researches aim at drawing certain conclusions confronting a concrete social or business problem.

On the other hand, fundamental research mainly concerns generalizations and formulation of a theory. In other words, “Gathering knowledge for knowledge’s sake is termed ‘pure’ or ‘basic’ research” .

Conceptualization of feminism

Feminism is a complex set of political ideologies used by the women's movement to advance the cause of women's equality and put an end to sexist theory and the practice of social oppression; and in a broader and deeper sense, feminism is defined as a variety of interrelated frameworks used to observe, analyze, and interpret the complex ways in which the social reality of gender inequality is constructed, enforced, and manifested from the largest institutional settings to the details of people's daily lives which includes feminist scholarship.

Feminist theory

Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality, and examines women's social roles, experiences, and interests. While generally providing a critique of social relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's interests

Feminist Research

- Feminist research aims at adoption of critical perspectives on women's issues that have been either ignored or have justified women's secondary position in society
- This research is prerequisite and essential for achieving the goal of equitable social and economic development
- Feminist Research 'insists on the value of subjectivity and personal experience.' – **Naomi Black.**

Cont...

Arlene Kaplan Daniel demonstrates that most feminist research is focused entirely on women because of the fact that the female interests have not been previously explored in other researches. Since Women's Studies are concerned with filling in the gaps, it becomes possible only on women by the feminist research about women.

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Michael Olliver and Manon Tremblay identify three basic principles of feminist research:

First, it has a double dimension of producing knowledge along with social change.

Second, it is grounded in feminist beliefs and values. It is a perspective of women about their world.

Third, it is interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary. There are different methodologies, providing different perspectives coming from women of different disciplines. It is continuously changing process.

Three Principles of Feminist Research

Tara Lyons, writing about feminist methodology says that there are three principles of feminist research:

- Power relationships between participants and researchers
- Reflexivity
- Objectivity

Power relationships between participants and researchers

In feminist research there is another angle to the process- the power relation between the researcher and the researched. Feminist researchers and those on whom the research is being done, do not belong to the same power hierarchy. It is argued that a non-hierarchical and “friendly” relationship with the respondents should be developed. Here the participant becomes a co-researcher.

Reflexivity

It is the central principle of the feminist methodology. Reflexivity is a researcher's examination of her chosen methods, her role in the research, her relationships with the participants, and how her social positions affect the research process (**Fitzgerald 2004**).

Fanow and Cook (2005) say that reflexivity also includes how researchers include themselves in writing about research and their emotional reaction to their own research..

Objectivity

The feminist research aims at making the research process objective. Standpoint theories place women's experiences and lives at the center of research. They acknowledge that “experiences produce knowledge and knowledge divorced from experience is colonizing, appropriate and oppressive”.

Feminist Research methods

It is concerned with asymmetrical power relationships including hierarchical power relationships in the research process and the relationship between researcher and researched. The role of the researcher is thus to produce useful knowledge which contributes to global gender justice, to changing women's subordination and to stopping all forms of social inequalities.

“Feminist research is imbued with particular theoretical, political and ethical concerns that make these varied approaches to social research distinctive”.

Holland (2002)

Feminist methodology instead should be based on real relationships which are equal and compassionate.

Ann Oakley...

Feminist perspective

Feminist perspective is defined as a set of facts and ideas acquired by those whose academic and intellectual orientation and interests are directed toward women's issues and problems in general and in particular those originating from oppressive, exclusionary, and discriminatory practices built into societal institutions, especially institutions such as the family, economy, religion, and the political, judicial and educational systems

Goal of Feminist Perspective

The ultimate goal of feminist perspective is to specialize in the issues and social problems specified above and to contribute to the improvement of society and the lives of all irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin and other related variables through gender lens

Conceptualization of feminist perspective

There are many different conceptualizations, or variations, of feminism. Some of these perspectives are congruent with each other, some build off of each other, and some are in strict opposition to each other. Though there are several feminist perspective the basic feminist perspectives are:

- Liberal feminist perspective
- Radical feminist perspective

Liberal feminist perspective

Liberal feminism is a traditional perspective that was established as a part of the first wave of feminism. It is often the root of comparison when deconstructing contemporary conceptualizations of feminism. It argues that “society has a false belief that women are by nature less intellectually and physically capable than men

Radical feminist perspective

Radical feminism is a perspective within feminism that calls for a radical reordering of society in which male supremacy is eliminated in all social and economic contexts. Radical feminists view society as fundamentally a patriarchy in which men dominate and oppress women.

Socialist/Marxist feminist perspective

This lens on feminism incorporates perspectives of social justice as well as socioeconomic differences. For many centuries women were considered the property of men and a key cog in the capitalist machine from a commodities perspective. Marxist feminists argue that the path to gender equality is led by the destruction of our capitalist society.

Conclusion

Feminist perspectives carry messages of empowerment that challenge the encircling of knowledge claims by those who occupy privileged positions. It is a form of Feminist thinking and practice that take steps from the “margins to the center” which eliminates the boundaries and forms knowledge building, boundaries that mark who can be a knower and what can be known.

THANK YOU

Feminism is a social, political, economic system by which all genders are valued, respected, and can live dignified lives

- Alicia Garza

