Advance Course in Social Psychology

Lecture 05: Methods Adopted in Social Psychology: Part III

Hello friends, I am back and I will continue with my discussion with module 2 that is methods adopted in social psychology. Till the previous discussion, I discussed about the different types of research methods such as case study, observation, questionnaire, interviews and survey methods. Today, I will discuss about the qualitative research methods, which is completely a different sphere of discussion where it is in contrast to the qualitative research methods where descriptive or quantified data is being analyzed. But in qualitative research, it is a type of research methodology that aims to gather and analyze non-numerical data in order to gain an understanding of individual social reality including understanding their attitudes, beliefs and motivation. In nutshell, qualitative research methods discuss about not only the beliefs and motivations in non-quantified manner, but it actually talks about and analyze about the experiences people share with each other on a particular topic, how they resolve their problems or issues in any social group or community and how they come to the understanding of what is going on and what is the solution to any specific problem. So, qualitative research method is used to explore complex phenomena or to gain insight into people's experiences and perspectives on a particular topic.

So, it is particularly useful when researchers want to understand the meaning that people attach to their experiences to any particular event and uncover their emotions, feelings and the reason of a particular behavior of a particular person or situation or any event. So, when we are talking about qualitative research method, it is completely based on individual's understanding of the situation or behavior in a very non-quantified manner where the resources can be in form of any newspaper, it can be in form of narratives, it can be in form of soft data or the information that is available in books or in any narratives given by any person. So, it is used in in-depth studies of small group of people to guide and support the construction of hypothesis. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive.

So, here lies the difference between qualitative and quantitative research method. When we are talking about quantitative method, we have data in hand, we have scores based on the responses given by the subjects, we can quantify them, we can score them, we can align them on a particular scale and tend to understand that to what extent a person's behavior can be measured or quantified. But when we are talking about qualitative analysis, there is no prediction only understanding or giving more description to an individual's behavior. So, this is about the in-depth analysis of human behavior while quantifying or describing an individual or group community's behavior. So, qualitative research methods include ethnography, grounded theory, discourse analysis and interpretive phenomenological analysis.

These are the types of qualitative research methods that social psychologist or maybe sociologist or anthropologist do refer to understand the environment in terms of behavior, in terms of any particular environment or any particular specific event. So, if we talk about ethnography, it talks about study, in-depth analysis or study of cultures or human

developments, grounded theory, it talks about creating a theory out of a particular event or case while collecting maximum information and how we tend to induce one's own thinking. It can be about discourse analysis, about any text, about speech or language that in what manner a person or a group of community uses a language in what manner. So, it is about a semantic understanding of language which deduces some another type of theories or it can be interpretive phenomenological analysis, it is about human development, it is about human behavior in a particular event that how a phenomena has occurred and on what basis or what stages a particular behavior has occurred. So, qualitative research methods support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style and a focus on individual meaning.

In a group, small group, any one person or subject who is being studied, whose behavior is being studied and different responses are being analyzed, then the researcher can induce a particular type of thinking while moving from specific to general. General here means that when we are studying a group of people, small group of people, then how to generalize that behavior that actually fosters inductive style of thinking. So, according to Sullivan, some commonly occurring features of qualitative research methods in psychology can be a tendency to use relatively unstructured data. Again, it is a difference between qualitative and quantitative analysis. In quantitative analysis, we have structured data because we have scores on a particular behavioral disposition.

For example, motivation, we can have a score on employees, where employees have score to indicate high levels of motivation or scores which indicates low levels of motivation. We can have categorization of personality types in a group based on introvert, extrovert, type A or type B. Whereas, when we are talking about qualitative analysis, the data is absolutely unstructured because it is about interactions, it is about perceptions, it is about beliefs and motivations that what a person perceives in the environment and how they are expressing their experiences. So, this is a way of collecting unstructured data. Other is an approach to theory that involves generating theories that are localized and context specific rather than telling large scale theories that seek to explain psychological process in all people.

Again, it is about generalizing a particular concept or particular pattern of behavior within a group itself that what kind of behavior dominates in any particular social group or community rather than quantifying or trying to prove any hypothesis. Rather, hypothesis is being generated once we have the unstructured data in our hands based on the experiences. The other is a tendency to use data analysis practices that seek out themes in the data. It is not only about that like in quantitative analysis that we get a score on a particular behavioral disposition. But in qualitative analysis, the data is being analyzed based on certain themes that if any community or group is interacting with each other or they are seeking to resolve any particular issue, then how people are dealing with that problem that gives a very broader perspective that how people are approaching that problem from different perspectives.

So, so many themes or perspectives can be identified, they can be collected, they can be structured those themes and then a specific thinking can be generated or hypothesis can be generated. Like in quantitative analysis, we say that X will lead to Y that can be a hypothetical statement. But in qualitative analysis, X leads to Y will only be created when the thematic interaction or conversation or data is already existing and how we are generalizing that data onto the whole community group or society and then coming out with the hypothesis that this is how people have resolved their situation in a very hypothetical way. The other is a focus on language and the way things are represented in text. So, when we are talking about qualitative analysis, it is about text, it is about scriptures, it is about narratives, it is about speech, it is about language.

So, the language, the speech, the narratives, the text, this is the unstructured data and how it is being represented in the text, how people are considering or making meaning out of those text will be the focus of qualitative analysis. And the last is that interest in the perspectives, sense making and individual experiences of people. So, this is the major focus of qualitative analysis that how people generate different perspectives in one particular situation, how they are making sense or making meaning after that particular situation and how they experience and perceive those situations while proposing any solution or dealing with that situation. So, these are the perspectives of qualitative analysis that how behavior can be studied in the field of psychology. Next comes this different types of qualitative analysis or research methods, the ethnographic research, grounded theory, interpretive phenomenological analysis, discourse analysis and focus group.

So, ethnographic research, ethnography is a branch of anthropology and is a systematic study of individual cultures. It is also a type of social research that involves examining the behavior of the participants in a given social situation and understanding the group members own interpretation of such behavior. So, the basic aspect of ethnographic research is the cultural perspectives. People in different cultures have different language, different speeches, different text, how people tend to interact with each other, what type of language they use, that is the localized language, how people tend to make meaning out of those languages representing a particular culture, that is the scope of ethnographic research. The other is grounded theory, which is one of the most recent and prominent research methodology that is being followed in psychology or in social sciences, that is grounded theory.

This methodology involves the construction of hypothesis and theories through the collection of an analysis of data. It involves the application of inductive reasoning. So, in this type of research methodology, the theory is being generated while collecting the unstructured data in various forms and how a hypothesis is being generated. As I said earlier that in quantitative analysis, hypothesis is first formulated and to test that hypothesis, a theory is being used to support the collected data and then hypothesis can be proved based on statistical techniques. But in qualitative analysis, when we are talking about grounded theory, the data is in unstructured format, all the data is being analyzed, different kinds of perspectives are being

collected or being analyzed and then hypothesis is being generated and later on a theory is being formulated based on those unstructured data.

So, it is basically a reverse of quantitative analysis that in grounded theory, first data is collected and later on the hypothesis is being created. Whereas in quantitative analysis, first hypothesis is being formulated and then the data is collected. So, this is a major difference between qualitative and quantitative and which is very much apparent in grounded theory. The other is interpretive phenomenological analysis. It aims to offer insights into how a given person in a given context makes sense of a given situation.

That is, it is about a particular person in a particular situation, how the person perceives that situation, what meaning does he derive from a particular situation and what kind of behavior can be collected from that particular person. So, this is IPA or interpretive phenomenological analysis. The other is discourse analysis. It is approach to the analysis of written vocal or sign language or any significant semiotic event. Here semiotic event means to how to make meaning, connote any particular meaning to connotations to any particular situation or a meaning that a person gives to a particular event or situation.

So, this is defined in different forms of coherent sequences of sentences, propositions, language and speech. So, discourse analysis is particularly focused on the language and speech of any particular group or community. And the last is focus group. It is a research method that brings together a small group of people to answer questions in a moderated setting. A third person is there where he or she moderates the interaction between two people or members of the group.

So, that interaction is completely based on collecting a qualitative data and using those data based on typical reactions that people make while adapting to any situation, issue, event or topic. So, how responses, how people are responding to a particular topic that is the major focus of any focus group study. Whereas, if we talk about the grounded theory itself, it also involves the application of inductive reasoning. Here inductive reasoning means moving from specific to general. When a particular event or group is being studied, then in general what kind of responses people do give to any situation or event that will help to induce a generic meaning to that situation.

So, this is the base of grounded theory that first data is collected qualitatively and then the hypothesis is generated and it leads to inductive thinking. So, this is the major focus of qualitative analysis. So, when we are talking about different kinds of qualitative research methods like ethnographic, grounded, IPA, discourse or focus group, we will majorly focus on grounded theory which is one of the most recent qualitative analysis that is being adopted in social sciences. So, we will go into detail about grounded theory. So, what is grounded theory? So, it is a method which was developed by sociologists Barney Glasser and Anselm Stross in

the year 1967 and they summarized their research in the book Awareness of Dying which was published in 1965 and they described their method as the discovery of grounded theory.

So, this theory was propounded by Glasser and Stross, they were sociologists and how they propounded this theory for qualitative research method while focusing on that how a theory is being built based on hypothesis. So, grounded theory is a qualitative research method in which the researcher derives a general abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study. For instance, any particular situation or event has been created or group of people are experiencing any different kind of situation, then there has to be some abstract understanding of what that particular situation among all the members of the group. So, some abstract understanding is already grounded in the behavior of the members of the group and how that abstract understanding is being developed into theory that is the base of grounded theory. As it is already mentioned on the slide that they derives the general abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of participants in the study.

So, every individual has some basic understanding of the situation and based on that basic understanding of the situation how every individual responds to that situation that forms the basis of grounded theory. So, grounded theory is a qualitative method that enables to study a particular phenomenon or process and discover new theories based on collecting and analyzing real world data. So, here the idea is that whenever grounded theory is being used to understand human behavior or any social phenomena or social behavior, then there is a process where basic understanding is the base and based on that abstract understanding the theories are being built upon. So, this is the base of grounded theory. So, this theory involves multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information.

So, based on the abstract understanding when the interaction is being fostered among all the members, so every member gives different type of responses. Those responses can be multiple in number and those multiple responses are being categorized or they get some thematic flavor to those responses and how every response can be coded or categorized based on the themes that is the base of any grounded theory. So, according to Glaser the strategy of grounded theory is to interpret personal meaning in the context of social interaction. So, for example, if there are 20 members in a group and one particular situation. So, there can be 20 abstract understanding of that situation and how those 20 abstract understanding of the situation will carry the personal meaning which a person connotes to that particular event.

So, this is grounded theory. So, there can be multiple responses, there can be multiple interaction among members and how those interactions and responses are being collected and categorized based on the understanding of the researcher and the members that forms a basis of grounded theory. The grounded theory seeks to understand the interrelationship between meaning in the perception of the subject and their action. It is but obvious what we think about the situation our responses will be accordingly and our action will also be accordingly. So,

there has to be a relationship between the situation and the action. It is about stimulus, organism and response whatever the event is there this that connotes to the stimulus.

The person is already there in that situation and how the person will respond to that situation that creates a very systematic relationship. So, that is the base of grounded theory that there is a interrelationship between meaning in the perception and subjects and their action. So, the methodology involves the construction of hypothesis and theories through the collection and analysis of data. So, whenever the responses are being collected then only the hypothesis is being generated that this is how the problem was being resolved by the members of the group. So, we can say that grounded theory is a research method which operates almost in reverse fashion from the traditional social science research which we have already discussed just now.

That in qualitative or in traditional research methods we first formulate hypothesis and then we try to prove the hypothesis. Whereas, in grounded theory the researcher does not formulate hypothesis in advance of data collection as is often the case in traditional researchers otherwise the hypothesis would be ungrounded in the data. Thus, hypothesis are supposed to emerge from the data. So, when we have collection of responses that will create the hypothesis and that will help to generate a new theory. Whereas, in traditional research method first hypothesis is collected and then data is collected.

So, grounded theory is completely based in a very reverse fashion. So, these concepts organize the ground level data that is the first hand responses the concepts become the building blocks of hypothesis and the hypothesis become the constituent of a theory. Constituent of a theory means the most basic element of any theory based on grounded theory itself. So, the ground level data is the abstract understanding that people have for a particular event or occasion or event and that forms the basis of formulation of hypothesis. So, in grounded theory first of all we already have the ground the abstract understanding in form of unstructured data and that will help us to formulate hypothesis and theory.

So, this is the most basic element of grounded theory. So, qualitative study driven by grounded theory examines the genuine concerns of study participants. Grounded theory works when it explains how study participants address the problem at hand and related problems. They are already perceiving any problem how they are dealing with it. So, that dealing with it is something that people will come with different perspectives responses and solutions that forms the basis of hypothesis.

And based on this those responses are modifiable and can be altered when new relevant data are compared to existing data. So, we can compare every new response or perspective with the already collected information from this from the same group and that will help us to expand our understanding and vision about the problem or finding solution to the problem. So, grounded theory is a systematic generation of theory from data that contains both inductive and

deductive thinking. This is very important to note that what kind of reasoning is being used when we are talking about grounded theory. So, inductive reasoning is a method of drawing conclusion by going from the specific to the general.

For example, when we are reviewing any population information of a city then for the last maybe for 15 or 20 years then there can be an observation that this is how the population is increasing every year with a particular percentage of rate. So, maybe after 5 years the researcher can automatically find an evidence of information that in what manner the population will also increase in the next 5 years. So, there is some information based on logical reasoning that how we can provide any reasoning for future as well. That is we can provide any descriptive information about particular event in a very based on a very inductive thinking. So, this is inductive thinking whereas, when we are talking about in deductive thinking it is a type of logical reasoning that starts with a general idea and reaches a specific situation.

So, situation is already there how people are dealing with the problem. So, the way people are dealing or people in a group are dealing with the problem that is the deductive thinking. How people are coming up with the solution to resolve any community issue or group issue then it becomes a deductive thinking. So, grounded theory is completely based on inductive and deductive thinking. So, when we are talking about generation of hypothesis then it is actually inductive thinking.

And when we are finding out solution to the problem based on the group members or the group members responses that how they are dealing with the problem then it becomes a deductive thinking. So, grounded theory is completely based on inductive and deductive thinking. So, one goal is to formulate hypothesis based on conceptual ideas. Others may try to verify the hypothesis that are generated to constantly comparing with the conceptualized data on different levels of abstraction and these comparisons contain deductive steps. So, whenever in grounded theory we have the abstract understanding and whenever we are at the same hand we are receiving different type of responses from the group members we are upgrading the available information about that group and then coming to the new conclusion.

So, this fosters deductive thinking that we have some general idea based on new information again we are coming to the different type of conclusion that is helping to compare the current situation with the previous information or we can also provide any description for the future responses as well. So, that creates a deductive thinking or deductive stages to reach a theory. So, this is the base of grounded theory and the another goal of grounded theory is to discover the participants main concerns and how they continuously try to resolve them. So, the as soon as interaction commences among the members and the researcher the researcher can can easily identify the problem and easily identify at the same hand that the way members are resolving their problems or issues within the group itself that helps us to induce particular kind of abstract thinking which is actually dominating the whole members or the whole group and how people

are trying to resolve with different perspectives. So, this is how inductive thinking and deductive thinking is prevalent when we are talking about grounded theory.

So, the question the researchers repeatedly ask in grounded theory is that what is going on, what is the main problem of the participants and how they are trying to resolve. So, right from the first stage of discussion about grounded theory it is always the main focus that what is the main problem of the group members, how what is the current status in the group, how people are resolving or the participants are resolving their problem. The way participants are responding it is actually an answer to the researchers problem and how it is being resolved. So, this becomes a major core of the study of grounded theory that based on that answers or solutions which are being offered by the participants that becomes the core and how that core is being further divided into sub sub sub areas how to understand the problem and formulate a new hypothesis and theory. So, this is the base of grounded theory that how grounded theory can work in a very qualitative fashion.

Next comes methodology. So, how grounded theory is being used? No doubt it is a qualitative research method but how to make it more applicable, how to use that theory qualitative analysis. So, there are certain steps that are being followed by social psychologist when they are using grounded theory as area of study. It has four categories four stages the first is code, concepts, categories and theory. So, codes are refers to refers to identifying anchors that allow the key points of the data to be gathered. The major problem is being highlighted and how that problem or any solution is leading to different kind of interactions and perspectives.

So, that is the code the nodal point. The other is concepts collection of codes of similar content that allows the data to be grouped. Now, when the nodal problem or nodal point has been captured by the researcher then it also carries different kind of concepts and meaning because there is abstract understanding general understanding or abstract understanding of the situation for every participant in the group. So, how that abstract understanding can be grouped in different areas that creates a concept. Different kinds of concepts emerge from different type of information and understanding. Based on that conceptualization comes categories that is broad group of similar concepts that are used to generate a theory.

As soon as the concepts are also being analyzed or realized in that interaction then those concepts are also been categorized in different forms because those concepts are flowing in different direction. How to streamline those concepts for that again new categories are being formed and the researcher is automatically filling and fitting every information in every identified category. And as soon as the coding conceptualization and categorization is done and all the information is woven together then it creates a theory that is a collection of categories that detail the subject of the research. So, as soon as the responses are been categorized they are being conceptualized they are being coded ultimately a collective information is being compiled. The information is compiled in one theoretical construct and that forms a theory based on grounded theory.

But the idea is that how these stages are being dealt upon. It is not simple to say that or easy to say that these stages exist and the grounded theory can be implemented. Every stage is in itself a process, sub process or sub process and how one process leads to another stage it requires lot of time and patience because in every stage every new perspective is been collected every new information is been collected and gathered it is upgraded it is compared sometimes and information becomes redundant sometimes the information is extremely useful but cannot fit anywhere in creating a theory. So, all these problems do exist in understanding the problem in a very qualitative manner and how a theory can be established. So, this is how grounded theory has its own methodology. We will discuss the whole methodology right now in a different way.

So, the results of grounded theory does not report statistically probabilities but a set of probability statements about the relationship between concepts or an integrated set of conceptual hypothesis developed from the empirical data. So, here when we talk about grounded theory we do not have any structured data rather the data is unstructured. So, when the data is unstructured we cannot quantify that unstructured data in a very statistical manner and we do not have any validity or reliability for that data. But definitely when we have that unstructured data the interpretation that we make or the researcher makes out of that data that has to be fitted accordingly to make it sure that whatever the purpose of the study was it is validating the same or it is measuring the same. So, to understand the validity of the grounded theory there are certain parameters that has been put forth to judge the quality of that data based on fit, relevance, workability and modifiability.

Where fit refers to closely concepts fit with the incidents they are representing and this is related to how thorough the constant comparison of incidents to concepts was done. First hand information is there more information is coming all the information is woven or interrelated to each other and finding out the real connect between first, second and third information and how that information is fitting with each other in a very proper manner. So, this is the parameter to judge the validity of any grounded theory that is the fit. The other is relevance which deals with the real concern of participants evoke, grab or capture the attention and is not only of academic interest. That means whatever response is being made by the subject or the participant that is very much relevant to the problem that evokes an attention that this particular response is very important for the study and it is only not only for the researchers interest, but it is very much or highly relevant to create or establish any theory.

So, this is fit and relevance. The other is workability it explains how the problem is being resolved with much variation. That means not only one solution has been given by the participants, but all the participants are coming with the broader perspective to resolve the issue that identifies multiple solutions to the problem and that is the workability of the theory. That if theory if the researcher is able to collect all the workable solutions and responses from the participants and which is well fitted and relevant to the problem that identifies that the grounded theory for a particular issue is highly workable. And the other is modifiability it

entails that a modifiable theory can be altered when new relevant data is compared to existing data. This is the most flexible component of grounded theory that whenever new information is coming the researcher is free to update the available information and make it more robust.

So, the theory can be modified until and unless there is exhaustion of information that is coming to the researcher. So, this is the most important component to ascertain the validity that is to alter or update the relevant data and compare with the previous or the future ones and coming to a proper solution. So, these are the parameters based on which we can say that any grounded theory or any theory that has been established based on grounded theory itself has its own validity based on fit, relevance, workability and modifiability. So, any grounded theory is never right and wrong that is true, but it is very much fit to understand the relevance, workability and modifiability.

So, next discussion about grounded theory will be in the next class. Thank you so much. Thank you.