

Book Review

Title of Book:	Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches
Authors:	W. Lawrence Neuman
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Reviewer:	Dr. Muhammad Saeed

The 7th edition of the book titled “Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches” authored by W. Lawrence Neuman is a fine masterpiece in the field of social science research. I have had the opportunity to read this book and found it a good source of learning research methods in social science. As the name designates, the book contains both qualitative and quantitative dimensions exploring examples from social science. It contains 15 chapters, beginning with “Why Do Research” (chapter 1) and ends with “Writing Research Report” (chapter 15). Henceforth, apparently the sequence seems quite convincing and logical from research paradigm.

Neuman’s book on Social Research Methods really speaks expertise in the field of research and its 7th edition also indicates its popularity among the readers. The book contains many such characteristics which distinguish it from other good books in the field of social science research. First, its each chapter under its title highlights a key quotation of a renowned scholar which is relevant to the nature of the chapter. In this way, the author has given the readers an opportunity of 15 key thought provoking messages to its readers. Second, at the beginning of each chapter, an outline of its key contents is presented that gives a picture for the readers that what contents are discussed in each chapter. Furthermore, the main headings and subheadings are written in bold with proper font size for the ease of the readers. Third, the key terms pertaining to each chapter are briefly defined/described at the bottom of the pages under shaded ‘Blocks’ for the purpose of readers’ attention as being the most important points to understand. Fourth, each chapter carries conclusion at the end of text narration that carries the gist / abstract of the chapter. Fifth, self-assessment questions (subjective-type) are given at the end of each chapter so that the readers after reading each chapter may review themselves what they have learnt? Sixth, each chapter ends with an adequate number of references given in a uniform pattern so as to help the readers to consult the mentioned

books, journals and other kinds of learning material for the in-depth understanding of the research concepts.

In its chapter 1 “Why Do Research”, Neuman discusses the reasons why we conduct research? He says “social science research is pervasive, and it affects your daily life as well as that of your family, friends, neighbours, and co-workers”. He beautifully concludes that social research does not always leads to perfect results, rather yields valuable information pertaining to understand the social phenomena. He explains the terms science, scientific literacy and scientific community. Science is produced from knowledge that results from that system. Scientific literacy is interpreted in qualitative perspective which is the ability to reason with numbers and other mathematical concepts. Scientific community is the collection of people which share a system of attitudes, beliefs, and rules that sustain the production and advance scientific knowledge. The author clarifies the differences in the initial two steps of quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative approach, the first two steps include ‘select a problem’ and ‘focus the question’ while in the case of qualitative research these steps are designated as “Acknowledge the self and context, and Adopt socio-cultural context”.

Chapter 2 explains major types of social research, which Neuman, describes under five dimensions: a) use and audience of research (basic & applied); b) purpose of research (exploratory, explanatory, & descriptive); c) within or across cases (case study and across-case research); d) single or multiple points in time (cross-sectional & longitudinal); and e) data collection techniques (qualitative & quantitative). Neuman considers content analysis as a quantitative research, while majority of the authors conceive it a qualitative research. The reason might be that content analysis is usually done against some measurable standards or rubric. He designates ‘historical research’ as ‘historical-comparative research’, as he convinces that here the researcher examines data on events and conditions in the historical past and/or in different societies.

Chapter 3 discusses about theory and theorizing in research. As stated by Neuman, “social theory is a system of inter-connected ideas which condenses and organizes knowledge about the social world”. He presents a contrast and comparison of social theory and ideology. Both contain assumptions; however in the latter case assumptions tend to be fixed, inflexible and unquestioned. The discussion closes with emphasis on ‘linking theory to research’ so that more benefits could be drawn from social science research. Chapter 4 deals with Methodology of Research, which starts with the philosophical foundation. The author presents a clear picture of comparison of three major approaches to social research .i.e. Positivism, Feminist, and Postmodern. Chapter 5 covers two main themes - literature review and research ethics. No doubt both themes have association, but it may mislead to the readers that research ethics are only confined to writing

literature review because ethics are also important at other stages, mainly during data collection and report writing. The author firstly describes the key purposes of literature review followed by its key sources. The author has truly emphasized on avoiding unethical acts such as deception, fraud, misconduct, break confidentiality etc. at all stages of research.

Chapter 6 is about strategies of research design. Here the author presents much detail of Triangulation and its key types i.e. triangulation of measure, theory, method, observers. The author discusses the key issues in qualitative and quantitative research. He concludes discussion by saying that a qualitative study generally takes a linear path and emphasizes objectivity while a quantitative research follows a non-linear path and emphasizes with details of a natural setting or a particular cultural context. Chapter 7 discusses qualitative and quantitative measurements. Neuman quotes Abraham Kaplan's as "Measurement is not an end in itself. Its scientific worth can be appreciated in an instrumentalist perspective, in which we ask what ends measurement is intended to serve, what role it is called upon to play in the scientific situation, what functions it performs in inquiry?" The author explains the measurement process in both qualitative and quantitative approaches by explaining the concepts of validity and reliability and the ways to improve these. The author has beautifully described the four levels of measurement i.e. Nominal, Ordinal, Interval and Ratio with examples of each from the daily life. The discussion ends with details of different types of scales used in measurement such as Likert, Thurstone, Guttman, and Semantic Differential. Chapter 8 presents contents about sampling in qualitative and quantitative research, the population, the probability and non-probability sampling techniques, and the ways to select appropriate sample in different kinds of qualitative and quantitative research studies.

Chapter 9 deals with Experimental Research. The author beautifully starts it with the brief history and purpose of experiment and then moved towards different experimental designs. He explains matching versus random assignment in the context of experimental research. Seven steps of an experiment are discussed including treatment or independent variable, dependent variable, pretest, posttest, control group, experimental group, and random assignment. Each design is explained with proper examples by drawing figures and tables as deemed necessary. It examines how the parts of an experiment can be combined to produce different experimental designs. Various threats to internal and external validity in experimentation are discussed. The real strength of experimental research is its control and logical rigor in establishing evidence for causality. The author gives reasons for preferring experimental designs as these carry tendency to replicate, less expensive and less time consuming than other research types.

Chapter 10 is on Survey Research, the most popular in social science disciplines across the world. The modern survey, as Neuman states, goes back to government-census firstly done in the 11th century in the UK.

While describing survey, the aspects to explain include techniques and principles, design issues (layout and format, question format etc.). The qualitative survey tool interview is also discussed. How a good interview can be conducted? What kind of training is desired for the interviewer? How to control interview bias? All these issues are discussed in detail. In this regard, the author referred to Naïve Assumption Model (a standardized survey research type in which there are no communication problems and respondents' responses perfectly match their thoughts) for conducting good survey interview. Chapter 11 deals with Nonreactive research and secondary analysis. This includes content or document analysis. Nonreactive research begins when we notice something that indicates a variable of interest. Here the researcher gathers and analyzes the text (books, newspapers, journals, magazines speeches, official documents, websites etc.). The coding, validity and reliability issues are discussed. The concerns of missing data and ethical considerations are outlined here so that the readers may get deep insight into the qualitative phenomena. Chapter 12 discusses quantitative data analysis. It describes analysis of data with one, two or more variables using descriptive and inferential statistics. These depict a fine picture to easily understand the application of appropriate statistics in different types of quantitative researches. A brief of some of the popular softwares in social science research such as Minitab, Microcase, SPSS, SAS etc. is given but perhaps needs more detail for better understanding.

Chapter 13 is about field research and focus group discussion. The author quotes field research definition stated by Emersion (1981) "the study of people acting in natural courses of their daily lives". Neuman (2015) further elaborates that "field research encompasses many specific techniques but usually the researcher directly observes and participates in small-scale social setting, most often in his/her home culture". In this regard, he describes ethnography and ethnomethodology as the key field researches. He also discusses the validity and reliability of field research and the ethical dilemmas which occur in conducting such studies. Chapter 14 describes qualitative data analysis techniques. It explains how open coding (the initial coding that examines the data to condense them into preliminary analytic categories or codes), axial coding (the second stage of coding where researcher organizes the codes, links them, and discovers key analytic categories), and selective coding (scanning all data and previous codes after concept formulation) are done in any qualitative research. The author also discusses tools of Narrative Analysis i.e. path dependency, segmentation, and historical contingency. In this context, he also elaborates how to analyze maps and diagrams in addition to text? But qualitative softwares' application is altogether seems missing here.

Chapter 15 focuses on research report writing, distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative research report writing styles. No research is complete without completion of its report and disseminating it to

all the relevant beneficiaries. A good report should consider its format and style along with conceptual elaboration and language presentation. It should be free of plagiarism and observe all research ethics. It should follow a uniform prescribed writing pattern as per requirements of the agency/institution where it is desired to be submitted. The author states that communicating results is a central part of the larger scientific enterprise as are the ethics and politics of social research. In regard to the politics of social research, he says highlights three points: a) awareness of research issues, its possible benefits and threats; b) work with others to advocate for independence of research; and c) educate the public, especially leaders of major institutions about the value and importance of independent social research.

No doubt, Neuman's book presents both an analytic and a holistic picture of social research by giving a balance between qualitative and quantitative approaches, but in view of the famous saying "there is always room for improvement in any human work", following considerations may further improve the quality of the book.

- Perhaps it would be appropriate if general objectives of the book are added at the start of the book. Then each chapter may start with specific chapters/student learning outcomes (SLOs).
- The book narrates examples of different research concepts from the technological advanced countries, mostly the USA and the UK. Since many of the readers also belong to other parts of the world, so some examples may be given from the developing countries to reflect upon their socio-cultural context.
- The sequence of the chapters may be revisited. For example, after introductory chapters on need and scope of research, and types/methods of research, and literature review, the remaining chapters may be arranged in sequence by putting quantitative and qualitative approaches separately. This may result in easy understanding and add to the value of the book.
- There are separate chapters on qualitative and quantitative data analysis, but these chapters do not contain adequate material pertaining to data analysis using quantitative and qualitative softwares which I think would be beneficial for the readers of this research book.
- Although research ethics including confidentiality, consent form, trustworthiness etc. are discussed in detail but the concept of plagiarism has not been discussed in detail. The possible harms of plagiarism, its types, and strategies to avoid plagiarism in research writing may also be discussed.
- Biography and autobiography as qualitative research types are almost missing. It is suggested that these types may be added in the chapter where historical research is discussed.

- A separate chapter on Developing Research Proposal may also be added. The guidelines in this regard will give an opportunity to the readers to aware of the process of developing qualitative and quantitative proposals.
- In the self-assessment exercises given at the end of each chapter, objective-type questions (especially multiple choice questions) should also be added, as this will enable the readers to do self-assessments themselves more quickly and effectively.

Last but not the least, there is no chapter on guidelines on citation or writing references which is an important part of an academic writing. The author may add guidelines on writing text/running references and end references.