

---

## Qualitative Research in Psychology – Past and Future

*Dr. Muhammad Saleem<sup>1</sup>*



Most of the time, qualitative research begins at relatively less trodden research path, where it collects sufficient succulent amount of raw data from a few key individuals and does not lend itself to numerical interpretation. Its purpose is to understand experiences of humans rather arriving at generalizable conclusions applicable to many. It is commonly held that qualitative research was not in vogue before 1980's. I, however, beg to differ, as 'marketing psychology' heavily relied on qualitative methods much prior to 1980's. Though psychology in its infancy was cradled deeply in qualitative techniques, with changing zeitgeist in research, qualitative psychology's contribution at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century became fragmented and illusory to a large degree. The method of qualitative research has been given its fair share by heavy weights of psychology including but not limited to Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, Carol Gilligan, Karen Horney, William James, Carl Jung, Laurence Kohlberg, Kurt Lewin, Abraham Maslow, Jean Piaget, David Rosenhan, Stanley Schacter, Wilhelm Stern, E.B. Titchener, Lev Vygotsky, John Watson, Max Wertheimer, and lately, Philip Zimbardo Frederic Bartlett, Alfred Binet, John Dollard, and Leon Festinger. Recently, two psychologists, Herbert Simon and Daniel Kahneman, have been awarded Nobel prizes; their mathematical models upon which their work stands are based on verbal descriptions and qualitative analyses of everyday problem solving.

The academic luminaries mentioned above utilized traditional techniques to qualitative research i.e. introspection, dream analysis, interviews, focus groups, observation etc. With the changing ethos in research it is imperative that the human condition be studied with new and diverse techniques. New techniques are emerging ever so quickly and it is incumbent upon us to bring the knowledge of latest leaps in qualitative research such as Emotional Journey Mapping, Screenshot Diaries, Contextual Inquiry, Cognitive Mapping, Personas and Scenarios, duo-ethnography, Oral History Interviewing, photovoice and many more to the foray.

Despite much richness and depth which is the hallmark of qualitative inquiry, the positivist, utilitarian approach in academia has favored numeracy over qualitative tradition. One need only take a fleeting glance at the disparity between quantitative and qualitative journals to understand the chiasm we need to bridge.

With this aim we have launched Pakistan Journal of Applied Psychology (PJAP) to open new horizon of qualitative research along with quantitative research.

I would like to extend my warm welcome to the readers of Pakistan Journal of Applied Psychology with all the hopes of making this journal an academic success!

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Muhammad Saleem, Editor In-Chief, Pakistan Journal of Applied Psychology