

LECTURE ONE: UNPACKING THE CONVENTIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF RESEARCH METHODS

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1.1 Introduction

Greetings everyone! Welcome to our first lecture on research methods. You have an exciting research journey ahead of you and I am looking forward to working with you all. In this lecture, we will define research, describe some of the types of research and discuss some of the limitations of the traditional understanding of research. We shall discover that traditionally scholars have described research using terms such as “objective”, “scientific”, “factual”, “logical” – all terms that conventionally been used to describe men. This lecture exposes this limitation of traditional research methods.



1.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of the lecture, you should be able to: -

- a) Define the term research
- b) Explain and describe the types of research
- c) Identify the limitations of traditional research methods
- d) Apply a feminist perspective to research methods

1.3 Definition of the term Research

Let us start our discussion by asking ourselves this question.



In text Question 1: What is Research?

Well done. You must have said that we do research whenever we gather information to answer a question that solves a problem. Kothari describes research as any kind of investigation aimed at unearthing new facts (Kothari, 2004) Clifford Woody refers to research as “defining and redefining problems, formulating hypothesis and suggesting solutions (Walliman, 2012). Basically, research is the search for knowledge, or investigation of a process or event (Kothari, 2004). For the purposes of this

module, we shall define research as an investigation that entails answering a question that solves a problem.

1.3.1 Research as Defined by Scholars

Scholars have described research in many ways. Indeed, let's examine a few definitions: -

RESEARCH AS DEFINED BY SCHOLARS

Research is the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data

(Orodho and Okombo, 2000)

Research is a systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena.

(Kerlinger, 1986)

Research is a systematic attempt to provide answers to questions.

(Tuchman, 2002)

Research can be defined as the systematic process of collecting, examining and interpreting data

(Kombo and Tromp, 2006)

When we look at these definitions, we realize that three terms recur in each of these definitions. These terms are "systematic", "objective" and "scientific."

1.3.2 Characteristics of Research



In text Question 2: True or False

1. Research is a logical activity
2. Research is a scientific activity
3. Research is an objective activity

4. Research is a systematic activity

Well done. You must have said that these descriptions all resemble words that have traditionally been used to describe “men.” Indeed, characterizing research as “logical”, “scientific”, “objective”, “systematic” projects a one-sided view of reality. Historically, the conventional understanding of research has taken on male-centered characteristics and have excluded female worldviews. While the female worldview was often described by scholars as “subjective,” “emotional” and “irrational/illogical,” the male worldview was characterized as “logical”, “scientific”, “objective”, “systematic”. This dual representation of the world fails to consider the experiences and knowledge of both men and women.



Take Note

Traditional definitions of research resemble words used to describe “men.”

1.4 The Purpose of Research

We research for different reasons. Some of these reasons include: -

- To categorize or classify objects.
- To grow in knowledge
- To grow in wisdom
- To convince others
- To share information

- To generate knowledge
- To describe norms.
- Generation of new theories
- Outlet for new ideas
- Career for some people
- Explain events (go beyond facts to give reason as to why)

- Show differences and similarities between variables.
- Determining the relationship between events or objects under study.
- Predict future events.
- Control similar events in the future.

For our purposes, research on women and leadership in Africa is critical. This is because the last two decades sweeping changes have taken place on the African continent. In the last ten to fifteen years, massive changes have taken place in so far as women's representation in governance processes is concerned. Today, Rwanda leads the world in women's representation in the National Parliament. Such trends of rising women participation in leadership are taking place in many places in Africa. From South Africa to Mozambique to Angola to Uganda. From Algeria to Zimbabwe to Cameroon to Tunisia to Burundi. Given these substantial changes, the ground of research is ripe and more often that not western researchers study African women using western lenses which do not necessarily reflect the realities of women in Africa. As Kabira and Lanoy it is important for women to be the source of knowledge about themselves and if you want to know about women, ask the women. We must learn to "interpret women's language, to understand how they name their world and to appreciate their priorities." (Kabira and Lanoy, 2018)

We have discussed the purpose of research. We shall now shift our attention and ask ourselves the following question



Activity

List some reasons why conducting research on African women is important.

Well done. You have been able to note that African women's voices and experiences have been left out of mainstream knowledge and it is important to generate knowledge based on African women's experiences and their realities. (Kabira & Lanoi, 2018). This leads us to our next subsection in this chapter on types of research.

1.5 The Types of Research

Now that we have discussed the meaning and significance of research. Let us now discuss the different types of research. The type of research is generally determined by the nature of the study. The type of research is determined by the purpose and the goal of the study. For instance if your goal is to conduct women friendly research then the type of research must take gender differences into account. . Even as we discuss the different types of research we must at the outset note that no one type of research is exclusively self-sufficient. . In terms of classification, research typologies are premised on purpose, process and the outcome of the research. The table below outlines several types of research and connects the type to the research process and the purpose.

Type of research	Short description	Purpose	Further Reading
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Descriptive	<p>A fact-finding inquiry.</p> <p>The researcher only reports what is happening</p>	To determine the state of affairs as they exist in the present	<p>Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)</p> <p>Walliman N, <i>Research Methods: The Basics</i> (Routledge 2011)</p>
Analytical	<p>Uses the information already available to make critical conclusions.</p> <p>Researcher relies on secondary data to understand why things are the way they are.</p>	Solving problems	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Conceptual	Relates to abstract ideas and theories	Platform to develop new ideas, reinforce existing ideas or interpret existing ideas	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Empirical	Research starts from hypothesis to be proven by the researcher and heavily relies on experience and observation..	Powerful tool used to prove hypothesis	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Clinical or	Involves in-depth analysis of a	Determines the root cause	Kothari C, <i>Research</i>

Diagnostic	specific situation.	of problems	<i>Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Applied	Research carried out to find a solution to a specific problem. Seeks to solve practical problems	Solving current and practical problems for example poverty alleviation.	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Fundamental	Research carried out for developing theories	Accumulation of knowledge	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Longitudinal	Research carried out repeatedly over a long period of time	Used to show or measure change over time	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004) Amy B, <i>Sociological Inquiry Principles: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods</i> . (1st edn, Maine: Flat World Knowledge 2012)
One-time research	Research confined to a specific period	To solve non-recurring problems	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Exploratory	Research aimed at developing hypothesis rather than testing them. It has no clearly defined problem	Develop hypothesis for further studies	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)

Historical	Employs historical sources as fossils, culture and other remains. Generally, studies the past	Evaluating past events and beliefs to find solutions for current problems Solutions	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004) Walliman N, <i>Research Methods: The Basics</i> (Routledge 2011)
Formalized	Research follows a specific structure and with specific hypothesis to tested	Testing hypothesis	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Conclusion oriented	Gives the researcher the freedom to pick the problem of their choice, redesign and conceptualize it as he/she likes	Sorting out problems faced by organizations or provide practical results to be used in making conclusions and decisions	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Decision oriented	The researcher has a specific goal. The method and problem are picked by the person ordering the research	Improve the existing practices	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Obtrusive	The researcher influences those participating in the process through conditions	To identify what people say	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Non-obtrusive	Participants in a research process are free. There are no conditions to influence them	Seeks to identify what people do as opposed to what they say	Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)

			Amy B, <i>Sociological Inquiry Principles: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods</i> . (1st edn, Maine: Flat World Knowledge 2012)
Feminist research	Women-friendly research	Identify and transform gender relations	Walliman N, <i>Research Methods: The Basics</i> (Routledge 2011) McConville M and Hong Chu' W, <i>Research Methods For Law</i> (Edinburgh University press 2007)
Cultural	Concerned with the language and cultural interpretation	Compare and replicate cultural texts	Walliman N, <i>Research Methods: The Basics</i> (Routledge 2011)
Action research	Research directed to specific problem, within the context of the research. Systematic inquiry towards one's own practice	Provide actionable feedback that bring about immediate change. Basically, to bring about positive change in practice	Walliman N, <i>Research Methods: The Basics</i> (Routledge 2011) Sagor R, <i>Guiding School Improvement with Action Research</i> (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

			<p>2000)</p> <p>Hine, Gregory SC. "The importance of action research in teacher education programs." (2013) <i>23 Issues in Educational Research</i></p> <p>Ngechu, Mary, <i>Understanding the Research Process and Methods</i>, 2010(4)</p>
Correlation	Research examines the relationship between two subjects of study	<p>Study variables that cannot be produced in the laboratory.</p> <p>Do not show cause but may be used to predict the future</p>	<p>Walliman N, <i>Research Methods: The Basics</i> (Routledge 2011)</p>
Comparative	Contrasts two parallel events/ideas/contexts or contrast past and present events based on analogy	<p>Leads to identification of gaps in knowledge.</p> <p>Searches for similarities and variance</p>	<p>Walliman N, <i>Research Methods: The Basics</i> (Routledge 2011)</p> <p>Mills, M., Van de Bunt, G. G., & De Bruijn, J.</p>

			Comparative research: Persistent problems and promising solutions.(2006) 21 International Sociology
Quantitative research	Based on measurement of quantity or amount. Applicable to things that can be quantified. Focuses on convergent reasoning	Determine the relationship between one subject and another (variables)	Walliman N, <i>Research Methods: The Basics</i> (Routledge 2011) Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
Qualitative research	Involves the research on the quality of subjects. Focuses on divergent reasoning	Makes sense of the reality and explain the social world	Walliman N, <i>Research Methods: The Basics</i> (Routledge 2011) Kothari C, <i>Research Methodology</i> (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004) Morse, J. M., & Field, P. A. The purpose of qualitative research. (1996)In <i>Nursing Research</i>

1.6 The Danger of a Single Story



Activity

Watch Chimamanda Ngozi's TeD Talk, *"The Danger of a Single Story."*



Source:

https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." -Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

In this 20-minute video, Chimamanda describes the dangers of a single story. She argues that often a single picture of Africa is painted when single stories about Africa as a land of poverty, war and destruction are retold repeatedly. Chimamanda's TedTalk draws our attention to the fact that single stories are disempowering and dispossess people of their identity by creating stereotypes and single sided narratives. By providing only one side of the picture, it reduces the richness of history, buries the

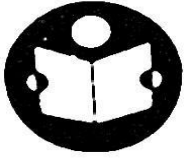
truth and perpetuates inaccuracies. It is therefore very important for us as researchers to push back against single narratives about women, about Kenya, about Africa and our world.

1.6.1 The Importance of Research on Women and Leadership in Africa

As we think about what we would like to research about, we need to be very careful not to use western research as the yard stick against which the African context and the Kenyan context is measured. For us to contribute to the transformation of African governance institutions and leadership styles through scholarship and research, it is very important to contextualize our research and ensure that the research we conduct is responsive to the interests of African women and how women's leadership is changing African politics. It is expected that by taking this course, you will at every stage critique theories, concepts and philosophies of political and socio-economic structures on their relevance to women, leadership and governance in Africa. The fact that Kenyan women suffer different kinds of oppression as compared to other women in other countries within Africa and worldwide is a basis for a research grounded in Kenyan socio-political and economic realities.

1.6.2 Telling Your Story

Now that we have discussed what research is and what it constitutes. We need to think about what research area we would like to explore. What sparks your interest? What is it that you are passionate about? What bothers you? What is your story? Your story is important. As Chimamanda notes in her tedtalk single stories are dangerous in that they do not capture the multiple realities in our world and perpetuate stereotypes. Please take some time to rediscover your passion. Think about the single stories in our world that bother you. Think about a question or a problem that bothers you deeply. Think about a problem that you would like to solve. Rediscover your passion. Write your story and generate knowledge in the area you love. Your story is yet to be told. Tell it.



1.7 Summary

This lecture has focused on unpacking the conventional understanding of research and research methods and outlining the dangers of a single story about research in Africa. We have found that there are different types of research, different types of research methods and methodology and ultimately it is important to select a method that suits the purpose for which you seek to conduct research.



1.8 Self-Assessment Questions

1. To define research
2. To explain the different types of research
3. To relate research methods to methodology
4. To discuss the significance of research in Africa



1.9 Research Activity

Kindly review the following book:

The Craft of Research, Booth - pg. 9-32 and 40-88.

After you have completed the process of reviewing the book, I would like you to complete your first writing workshop exercise which is appendix one in this module. Spend the next seven days or so thinking about the research area you are most passionate about. What bothers you? What are you passionate about? What problem would you like to solve? What keeps you up at night?

Think about an area you would like to investigate -- something that you really care about around women and leadership in Africa. Conduct some preliminary research about this area in the library, on the internet, e-resources, consult your lecturers, revisit your old assignments and areas in law you found interesting and use the Craft of Research as a guide.

Once you have a general idea about the topic, use the first writing workshop exercise at the end of this module to reflect on this question.

Please complete this assignment before proceeding to the second lecture.



1.10 Further Readings

- 1 Kothari C, *Research Methodology* (New Age International (P) Ltd 2004)
- 2 Booth, *The Craft of Research*, pg. 9-32 and 40-88.
- 3 Blaxter L, Hughes C and Tight M, *How to Research* (3rd edn, Open University Press 2006)
- 4 Kabira & Lanoi, " Feminism and Feminist Research Methods: Making Research Work for the African women," African Women Studies Centre, 2018.
- 5 Ngechu, "Understanding the Research Process and Methods," 2010.